



Architecture

and cultural definition

By John Nelson

and

A Design Thesis Submitted to the Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture of North Dakota State University

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of the Master of Architecture



Primary Thesis Advisor



Thesis Committee Chair

Architecture

cultural definition

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Abstract

Architecture and cultural Definition

Typology:

North Dakota American Indian Center

Site:

Chief Looking's Indian Village Bismarck, ND

Area:

23,000 sq ft

This thesis will investigate the role of architecture in representing and retaining a culture through architecture's inherent characteristic as a symbol of past and present cultures. This project focuses on the Native American populations of the Bismarck/Mandan area and the effect a cultural center could have on the larger community. The project is placed within the landscape of the historic site Chief Looking's Indian Village located within Bismarck, North Dakota. In the project I work towards a higher goal of creating an artifact sensitive to the Native American culture and a symbol of continued growth.

Culture, Symbol, Native American, Artifact,

Problem Statement

Can architecture be a catalyst in reviving
and uniting a localized cultural
community?

Statement of Intent

Typology

North Dakota American Indian Center

Claim

Architecture can become a unifying artifact for a cultural community.

Premise

Architecture is a symbol; it can redefine, unite, and memorialize the culture of the Native Americans of North Dakota.

A flourishing community relies on the unity of its members.

Cultural strength is retained in those who share in their culture.

Unifying Idea

By means of proper interpretation and sensitivity to cultural values of the past and present the architect can become the carpenter of a unifying cultural artifact.

Project Justification

Cultural communities across our nation are becoming more disconnected with their local as our modern age makes it easier to maintain our previous connections. Though we are social creatures and need our communities for support and social interaction. And I see architecture as a way to foster and strengthen community relations because of its ability to act as a symbol of the group.

The Proposal

Narrative

Our society is home to a variety of cultural groups which have become disconnected from each other and their overall community. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons such as financial pressures, physical barriers, mental struggles, or the overbearing nature of the surrounding society. But I believe many of these things can be overcome through a supportive and strong community. We as human beings rely on community and connect best with those in which we can share our cultural heritage.

Though our past culture seems to escape us as we embrace our present society, relatives, relations, events, celebrations, and, history reunite us. All these things recall our cultural past and give us a day to remember our history, but many of us spend little time incorporating this history into our present lives, whether that be sharing in our cultural heritage with those similar to us or with our community.

So how better can we retain, represent, and share in our unique cultural differences. I see architecture playing a role in defining the cultural variety within our communities. Through its ability to be a symbol of the group, retaining the groups cultural identity while representing its their present relation with the community, it ultimately becoming a catalyst

for cultural growth and education within the community. The architecture growing to be an artifact representative of the people and an ambassador to the community.

In my specific project I will be looking at the Native American cultural group within and around the metropolitan area of Bismarck/Mandan North Dakota. This group makes up the next largest racial group in the metropolitan area and the state of North Dakota. A disproportionate number of the people suffer from financial strains, poor health, and problems with dependency and depression, and yet there is oddly a limited number of identifiable cultural resources for these people within the metropolitan area. I am proposing a cultural artifact for the people that is relevant to their time where the community can seek support for its personal burdens and share in cultural growth. In addition I hope for this piece to relay to the society the cultural group's history, art, and values in a positive manner.

Owner/Client

The Bismarck Park District in partnership with the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission will be the owners and clients of the project. These two organization will also be the financial contributors with support form the city of Bismarck and state of North Dakota.

User

The clientele of the facility will largely consist of the resident population of Bismarck, North Dakota with its general peak usage being in the early afternoon to evening. This is the time when group meetings and educational sessions might occur as well as the ideal time for community and personal events. I am still only expecting a range of 20 - 50 people on average with a peak being around 100 people during events and group meetings. With these expectations, I will only be planning parking for the average range of guests to preserve the quality of the site and because of the opportunity for parking along the road.

User/Client Description

User groups

Students/teachers: Students and teachers from Bismarck and the surrounding areas will visit the cultural center for an educational experience most likely during the spring and fall seasons.

Tourists: Tourists from the state of North Dakota and surrounding areas may stop in for an educational experience while I will also be expecting Native American tourists to visit the museum during cultural events such as the annual pow wow and legislative periods held within the capital city. Perhaps this site will become the future location for many events held within the capital city.

Citizens of Bismarck: Citizen of Bismarck shall utilize this center for its cultural experiences and educational purposes. While also benefiting from its service as a counseling resource for the citizens of the community and a host for cultural education classes. They also shall be the main visitors, contributors, employees, and volunteers for this institution making it imperative that the community maintains its involvement.

Citizens Requiring Health and Psychological Counseling: Many in our society have formed unhealthy habits or are under physical, mental, or financial strain. This cultural center will strive also to provide help to those suffering through group work and personal counseling.

Employees and Volunteers: In order for the center to function it could require up to fifteen employees and help from volunteers under special occasions with positions ranging from administrator, curator, cultural historian, receptionist, custodial staff, and general laborers.

Exhibit

This museum will contain a series of exhibits concerning the presence of Native American populations in North Dakota as well as past and present art and artifacts relevant to the state. Many of these exhibits will change on a monthly basis, focusing on a different topics, while there will also be an additional gallery space for any regional works to be displayed within the museum.

Great Hall

A large space will be incorporated into the design to serve as an event hall, as well as a reservable space for any range of activities.

Landscaping

Native American relation with nature will be an important aspect in creating a culturally relevant artifact. The Landscape will be a carefully considered aspect as it is important that it maintains the natural setting of this historic site while still being a guiding educational element. This landscape will serve in the following ways: a public space, historical site, and event space.

Commercial Space

Space dedicated to the sale of crafts and food/beverages for events

Breakout Spaces

Breakout spaces shall be incorporated to house educational classes, group activities, and counseling groups.

Utilitarian Spaces

Bathrooms, mechanical, storage, offices, maintenance rooms

Major Project Elements

Region

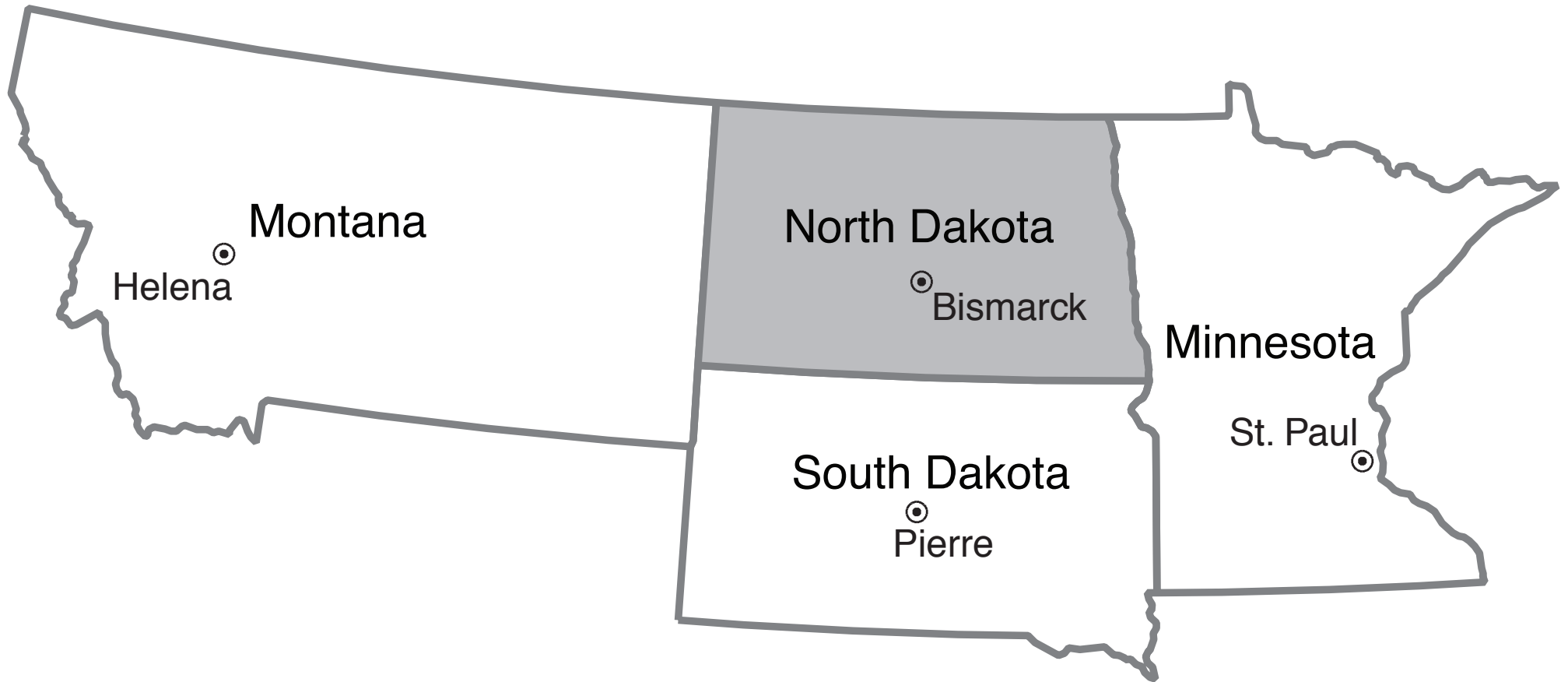
North Dakota is on the top edge of the American Midwest and is a rich area for Native American culture, holding within this specific state four prominent Native America reservations and many other cultural settlements. In this region the Native America population is also the second most populous racial group and historic population of the land.



Site Information

City

Bismarck is the capital city of North Dakota and has a population of 61,217, of which nearly 5% are of Native American ancestry, being the largest non-caucasian cultural group within the city. The city is also the center for state governmental decisions and is a cultural and economic hub for the state. It is surrounded by an array of Native American cultural sites such as the United Tribes Technical College, Chief Looking's Earthlodge Village, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, and Double Ditch Historical Site.



Site

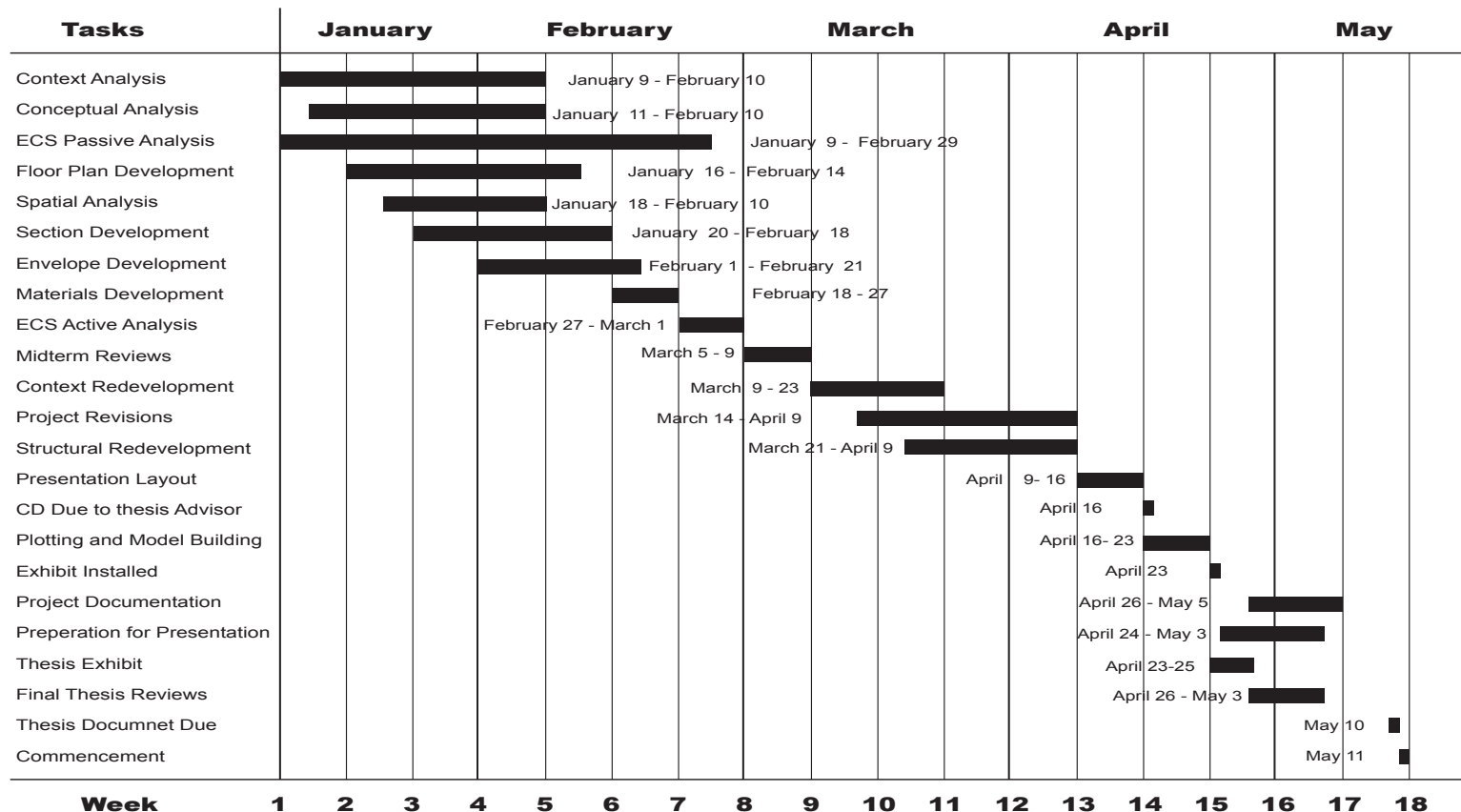
The site will be located within the Pioneer Park Overlook in Bismarck, North Dakota, which also houses the site of Chief Looking's Earthlodge Village. This historical site has been in decline over the years but remains a strong cultural and visual site. This specific site is also loved by the city for its general beauty and lush natural environment which overlooks the Missouri River. For this reason, I feel this site is a great cultural crossroad for the people the of Bismarck, North Dakota.



What is architecture's role in defining a cultural group's present relation within the larger society. Philip Johnson has said "Monuments last much longer than words. Civilizations are remembered by buildings. There is nothing more important than architecture"(Goldberger 2009). So in my search for a way to define our uniqueness as people I see nothing more apt to represent and define a group than architecture. Simple examples of this idea can be easily seen in the way chains brand their buildings or the monumental stature of governmental buildings. Though with my thesis I hope to find a way in which to create a culturally significant artifact which would be able to serve as a catalyst in the growth of the community. By representing the people in a honorable manner and creating a point for cultural exchange. Ideally, It will serve as a monument to the community's diversity and acceptance.

Project Emphasis

Using the mixed method approach I will be collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously and translating it into the project as I progress with the design process. Using this method my initial research will be concerned with supporting my project emphasis and unifying ideas while also doing deeper research into this specific culture group and building typology. In addition, I will also be keeping track of my research and design process on a weekly basis by maintaining a file of my scanned process and other work. I will then be able to return to it at any time to see the progression of my design or return to a previous rendition with ease and clarity.



Plan for Proceeding

2nd year

Fall 2008 - Stephen Wisher

Tea house - Fargo, ND
Boathouse - Minneapolis, MN

Spring 2009 - Meghan Duda

Dance Studio - Fargo, ND
Dwelling - Fargo, ND

3rd year

Fall 2009 - David Crutchfield

Probstfield Farm - Moorhead, MN
Fargo Library - Fargo, ND

Spring 2010 - Milton Yergen

Dove Creek Technical College
- Dove Creek, CO
Board Shop - Fargo, ND
Ice House - Open Site bc
Biker Bar - Regent, ND

4th year

Fall 2010 - Bakr Mourad Aly Ahmed

High Rise Studio - San Francisco, CA

Spring 2011 - Don Faulkner / Frank Kratky

Marvin Windows Competition - Fargo, ND
Williston Urban Planning - Williston, ND

5th year

Fall 2011 - Paul Gleye

Fargo City Center - Fargo, ND

Studio Experience

The Program

research	21
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project goals	61
site analysis	65
climate diagrams	83
programming	91

Research

Research Summary

Our society is home to a variety of cultural groups which have become disconnected from each other and their overall community. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons such as financial pressures, physical barriers, mental struggles, or the overbearing nature of the surrounding society. But I believe many of these things can be overcome through a supportive and strong community. We as human beings rely on community and connect best with those in which we can share in our cultural heritage.

Though in time our past culture seems to escape us as we embrace our present society. The question becomes what reunites us with our cultural heritage: relatives, relations, events, celebrations, history, and so on. All these things recall our cultural past and give us a day to remember our history but many of us spend little time incorporating this history into our present

lives.

So how better can we retain, represent, and share in our unique cultural differences. I see architecture playing a role in defining the cultural variety within our communities, through its ability to be a symbol of the group, retaining its cultural identity while representing its present relation with the community. Ultimately becoming a catalyst for cultural growth and education within the community while with time progressing to an artifact representative of the people and ambassador to the community.

In my specific project I will be looking at the Native American cultural group within and around the metropolitan area of Bismarck/Mandan North Dakota. This group makes up the next largest racial group in the metropolitan area and the state of North Dakota. Though they also represents some of poorest demographics relating

to finance, health, dependency and depression. Yet there are a limited number of identifiable cultural resources to help these people within the metropolitan area, so I am proposing a cultural artifact for the people that is relevant to their time where the community can seek support for their personal burdens and share in cultural growth. In addition I hope for this piece to relay to the society the cultural groups history, art, and values in a positive manner.

Research

Urban Indian

In my research I have been investigating Native Americans relationship with the American society and how this has affected their lifestyle and relation to cultural heritage, specifically concerning the Indian population within the Bismarck/Mandan metropolitan area in which I investigated the decision to move to the city, the psychological differences Indians have developed in their relation to the Modern Society, and the continued substandard lifestyle seen in finance, health, and education.

Our nation as a whole has seen an increase in the Native American population at a greater rate than any other minority, and surprisingly more than half of the population is located in metropolitan areas outside of the

reservations (Schneider, 1994). Why has this become such a popular decision in the last thirty years? Schneider (1994) and Peterson(2007) agree this change is due to education, increased job opportunities, federal employment programs, and the present generations acclimation to modern culture. An example of this is seen in Bismarck, North Dakota. Which has reached the highest metropolitan Indian population in the state due likely to the United Tribes Technical College, opportunity for culturally relevant government work, general job opportunities within a flourishing economy, and a location of cultural relevance to many tribes within the state(Schneider, 1994). This change has affected the people adversely by breaking down the

strong family structure seen throughout Native American history, while also separating the more traditional Indians from their contemporary counterparts, “urban Indians”. This segregation of the Indian population has been a product of cultural integration and has left many Native American with an identity struggle.

Growing up between two cultures has led to a difference of opinion in which culture Native Americans accept as their own. Jane Schneider’s (1990) text has characterized four ideals felt within the Native American community: traditional, transitional, marginal, and bicultural. Traditional is strongly supportive of Indian values while caring little for non Indian values. Transitional thinks negatively of Indian values and believes in an assimilation with the modern society. Marginal can see no value in either culture and bicultural thinks of itself as living in two worlds which are integrate into their lives. These classifications show the wide range of cultural change in the community,

and a sampling of Urban dwelling Indians has shown 22% identifying with traditional, 47% with transitional, 16% with marginal, and 23% with bicultural. This shows a weighted scale for assimilation which has been the way the Indian population has been treated by the government and education since their encounters nearly four hundred years ago. Yet still the Native American culture persists and I believe it will continue to thrive and coexist in our modern society, though not without change.

In addition to changing cultural ideals, Native Americans are also struggling against financial inequalities, failing education, and health issues compared to other residents within the metropolitan (Peterson 2007). When many Indians move from the reservations to the city it is for an employment opportunity, though the average household income of a Native American family in Minneapolis, MN is 63% below the average median (Peterson 2007). This type of situation occurs nationwide and can be attributed

to a range of things though the below-average education has been a hard-hitter. Educational averages of Native Americans have tended to be some of the highest dropout ratings and lowest test scores, though that is not true for all areas as Oklahoma, has seen Native Americans at the top of the charts (Peterson 2007). In many cases the education system, hasn't been trying to work with the students culture, an example being that English would be the only language spoken and teachings focus only on European values (Schneider 1994). This was a way in which the government thought to achieve assimilation of the people but has done more to cripple them, but today many schools across the nation are beginning to accommodate their culture through language mainly. But still there is room for improvement as Native Americans continues to show a high rate of dropouts and a smaller percent pursuing higher education (Schneider). Leading to increased health issues largely due to the high rate of poverty and lacking education

which has left Native American's with the highest rates for infant mortality, alcohol related deaths, and diabetes. Mostly stemming from the abuse of alcohol which has been shown to be Native American's greatest crutch at the moment. All of these issues, financial, education, and health alike, are all solvable issues and the most obvious solution I see lies in community action and support. Native American history is tied to a strong community and I believe that this could be a start in strengthening the Native American population.

Community

In my research I learned much about the tribes of North Dakota but nothing seemed more relevant than their strong extended family ties. The historic Native American population of this area would keep large extended families stretching to distant relatives and even others we wouldn't currently consider to be family (Schneider 1990). They lived this way to help each other survive in this unforgiving land. This in turn led to tribes having little or no laws because so many of the people were relatives, crime was rarely an issue due to their respectfulness for family, survival, and the tribe. Today I see the separation of the people from their culture as a breaking down of their strong family ties. Even today many Indians who value their heritage continue to make a point to stay connected with their history and the members of the tribe (Schneider 1994). This care and generosity for one another is a strong aspect of their culture and an element which I think needs to be revived within the urban community.

An example of architecture bringing together community not far from the Bismarck/Mandan area is the Minneapolis American Indian Center. Thomas Hodne and Gerald Johnson spent two years of researching, designing, and in council with the clients to achieve the following goal.

“Help spur a renewed sense of identity, a truer self image... [through] a physical form that would proclaim to the Indian community and the rest of the city an emerging pride in the indian heritage.” (Krinsky, 1996)

The end result is one of the nation’s oldest Native American Cultural Centers providing social and cultural services to the people of the area since 1975 (Minneapolis American Indian Center, 2009). In the project they utilized natural materials and light while maintaining a open plan for group gathers. Avoiding any specific tribal ties to avoid conflict between and tribal groups that might utilize the facility. Though the true success is in the 10,000 members of

the community it serves annually (Minneapolis American Indian Center, 2009), as well as the work it has done to create a supportive and strong community. This type of project is what I feel can be a catalyst in the growth a strong Native American Community within the Bismarck/Mandan area.

Architecture

Architecture's role as a catalyst I feel stems from its power to be a symbol. Frank Lloyd Wright called pieces of architecture he found important "great granite books," referring to the story a building tells of the people, time, and place (Goldberger, 2009). For Example, to build a hospital the architect must study the operations of a hospital, know the biological requirements, understand human comfort, and much more to bring together a functional building. As Goldberger(2009) says, "The ties between architecture and the things it contains makes architecture different from anything else. Nothing else you could say is about everything." The building is built in this manner to operate ideally for this circumstance. Making it a symbol of that entity, more obvious examples I feel are in the branding we see of commercial buildings around the country or the scale and power of our governmental buildings. One example of architecture's power as a symbol was Abraham Lincoln's demand to continue the

construction of the dome upon the Capital during the Civil War (Goldberger, 2009) Despite the lack of manpower and money he knew this was a symbol of the nation coming together and there was no speech he could deliver that could relay a more powerful message (Goldberger, 2009). And this isn't the only case; our world is largely know by architectural landmarks, artifacts of the present culture.

So what do we embody in our building? Obviously we as architects have been striving for firmness, commodity, and delight but as a society what do we embody in our built world. I personally agree with Goldberger's (2009) statement:

We build, in the end, because we believe in a future - nothing shows commitment to the future like architecture. And we build well because we believe in a better future, because we believe that there are few greater gifts we can give the generations that will follow us than great works of architecture,

both as a symbol of our aspirations of community and as a symbol of our belief not only in the power of imagination but in the ability of society to continue to create anew.

We are always creating significant pieces of our culture, history, and art even if we don't realize it. As Robert Hughes (1980) said: "Painting can make us happy, but building is the art we live in; it is the social art par excellence, the carapace of political fantasy, the exoskeleton of one's economic dreams." Architecture is an embodiment of our culture, representing the present, retaining the past, and progressing into the future.

The Native American population of the Bismarck/Mandan area I feel deserves and could grow from an architectural embodiment of its values: a piece which could become an urban center for cultural preservation, education, and sharing, helping to strengthen the community of the Native people as well as the Native American

relation to the metropolitan community.

Bringing together community to define their culture in the modern age with the building over time earning its place as an artifact of the present Native American culture, and symbol of their presences amongst the overarching culture.

Case Studies



Programmatic Elements

Location:

Moose, Wyoming

Architect:

Bohlin Cywinski Jackson

area:

22,000 Sq. Ft.

Completion:

2007

The Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center establishes a welcoming presence to the Grand Tetons while also educating and inspiring its guests. The building begins from the parking lot which is a short walk to the courtyard which allows visitors to observe the building and the nature of the site as they walk to the entrance. As the guests enter the courtyard they are greeted by a jagged roof line, which occludes the Grand Tetons but presents a lowered rock garden surrounded by a colonnade of tree columns supporting the overhanging roof structure. As visitors progress through the main entrance the Grand Tetons are revealed through the architect's canvas of glass, wood, and stone. Now in clear view is a series of exhibits, in one direction and in the other the information desk. Moving through the exhibits guests are presented with the history of the people, flora and fauna, geology, and recreational activities having taken place

The Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center



within the park. Further on, as the building wraps back up the courtyard, there is a small art gallery amongst the walls and a presentation room showing a film of the park. After the film a guest may cycle back through the exhibit and decide to exit early and enjoy the terrace for an unobstructed view of the park's beauty. Entering on the opposite side of the terrace, guests walk past the monumental board formed concrete and stone fireplace, the heart of the building. Moving forward takes the guest to the information desk, gift shop, and utilitarian spaces. When through gathering information and gifts, the guest exits again through the entrance catching another look at the majestic mountains on the way out and traveling back through the colonnade and back to the parking lot to head into the park.

Thoughts

I really enjoyed this case study for its relation to nature, though in many cases that was the reason I had chosen my others. The uniqueness I found in this building was in the details and its intimate relation to its site. As Peter Bohlin (2009) put it, “We aimed to make a building that is sensibly ordered and surprisingly evocative, shaped to the nature of the land and the people who visit it.” Surprisingly evocative was a perfect explanation as they turned views of nature into a gallery and put such detail into their work that each connection was elegant and beautiful in itself. Even taking the time to mimic the geologic reaction of site through their gallery displays or mimic the peaks through the jagged roof and glass. The building has more to offer yet as it is designed to weather much in the way an old abandoned barn will when left to the prairie (Lehoux, Riddell & Bohlin, Cywinski, Jackson (Firm), 2009). This move will give

the building more character as it continues to visually grow with its visitors, making it just like an old friend, holding a special place in their hearts and undergoing the same hardship as each and every one of us. Becoming a piece of this wondrous landscape in the most modest manner, its success in its ability to inspire and focus its visitors on the beauty within the national park.

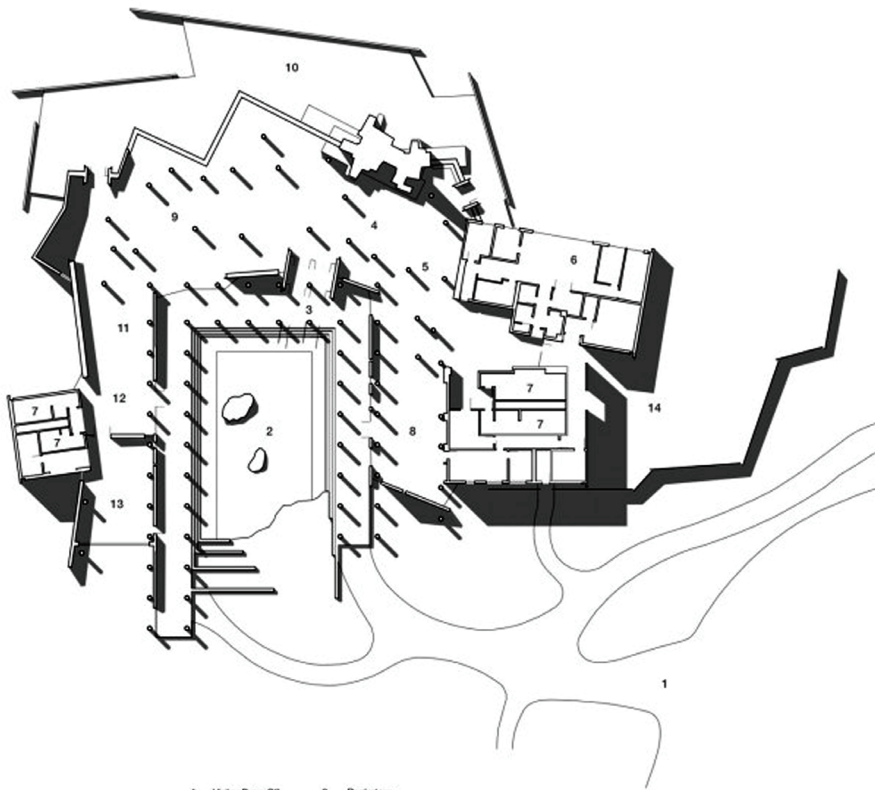
Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center

Architect: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson

Location: Moose, Wyoming

Area: 22,000 sqft

Year: 2009



0 4 12 24ft
Floor Plan

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Visitor Drop-Off | 8. Bookstore |
| 2. Courtyard | 9. Exhibits |
| 3. Main Entrance | 10. Terrace |
| 4. Gathering Space | 11. Art Gallery |
| 5. Information | 12. Evening Entrance |
| 6. Administration | 13. Classroom |
| 7. Toilet Rooms | 14. Service |



Building Sections

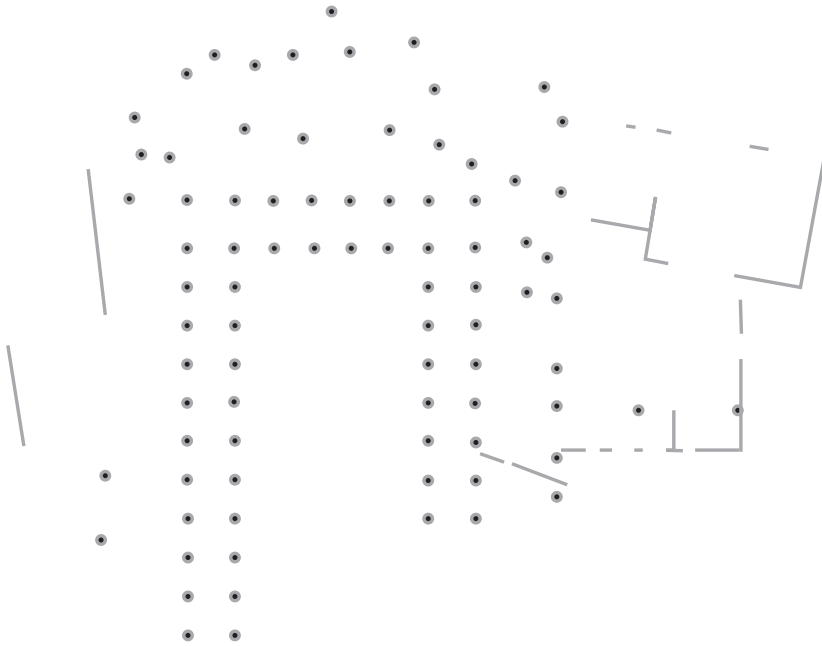
0 8 24 48ft



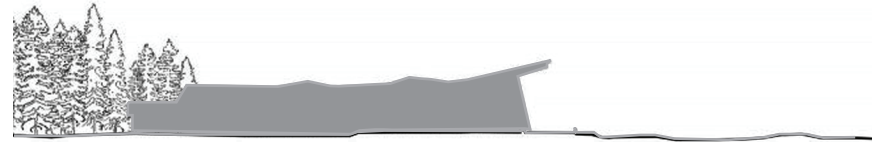
Building Sections

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Structure



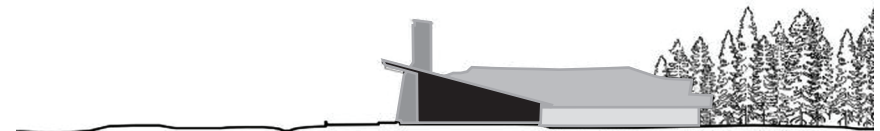
Massing



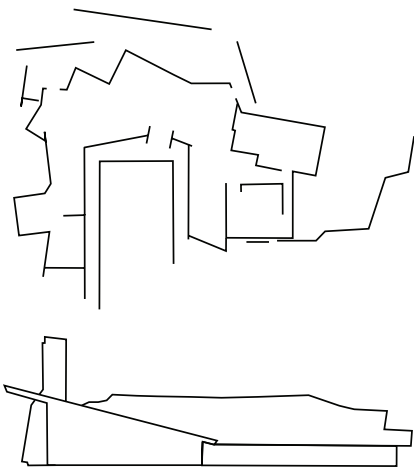
Natural Light



Hierarchy



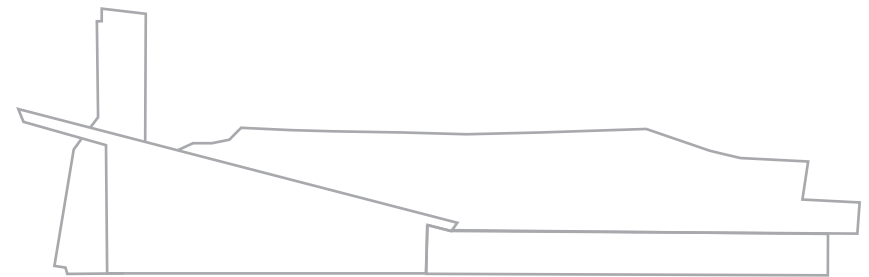
Plan to Section

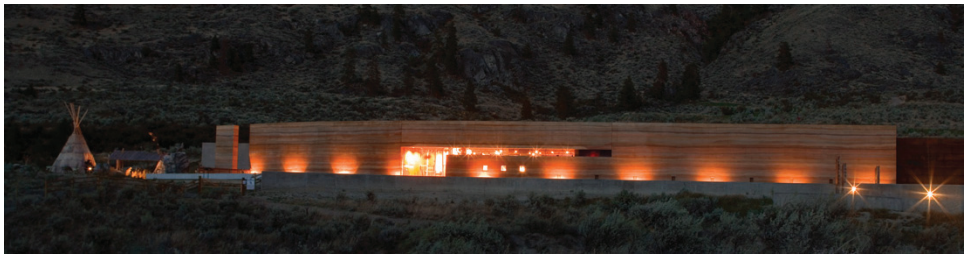


Circulation



Geometry





Programmatic Elements

Location:

Osoyoos, BC

Architect:

**Hotson Bakker
Boniface Haden**

area:

12,000 Sq. Ft.

Completion:

2006

The Nk'MIP Desert Cultural Center is a response to the unique desert climate and local aboriginal culture. Exploring architecture's role in representing the cultural past and helping shape the future of the aboriginal culture through indoor and outdoor exhibits allowing the building to become a piece of the historical site. A portion of the building is submerged and covered by the site for thermal massing purposes learned from the aboriginal culture. Though what really speaks of the project is the layering of the rammed earth and concrete walls. From the parking lot the guests move through a series of concrete walls, arriving at the plaza which is used as a group meeting place. From here they follow the prominent rammed earth wall and water channel to the entry. Once in the gate the reception, gift shop, offices, and utilitarian features are available, guests proceed forward to find the exhibits. From here guests

Nk'MIP Desert Cultural Center



enter into a presentation space or move forward to the circular object in plan, which is a “pit house” there to invoke the experience of a conversation around a fire (Arch Daily, 2008). Visitors can then proceed outside to a series of exhibits on native planting, an amphitheater, a tule mat teepee, a figural sculpture, and a snake research area (Arch Daily, 2008). This area is also the trailhead for guided and unguided trails going to pavilions, reconstructed pit houses, and sculptures.

Thoughts

Why I find this project unique is in its effort to use architecture to retain and represent the aboriginal culture. I found the exterior and interior exhibits along with the trail to be a great way to breakdown the general barrier between indoors and outdoors. As well, I thought it was wonderful to get the visitor out into this important and unique landscape which also allowed them to see these artifacts in their more natural settings. The decision to look to the aboriginal past to learn from their partial subterranean homes shows interest in their culture and when paired with the rammed earth walls the building becomes a representation of the site. I find this important because this land is sacred to the people and the way the building interacts with the land can have a major impact in the acceptance of the project. I feel this project has done a great job in relating to its landscape with the beautiful use of concrete, rammed earth,

wood, glass, and water. Yet another architectural success based upon modesty and respect for the site around it an issue which I too must overcome in the site I have chosen.

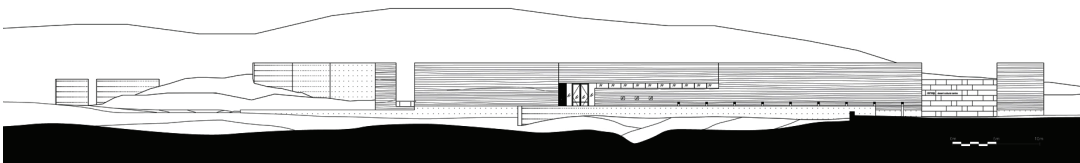
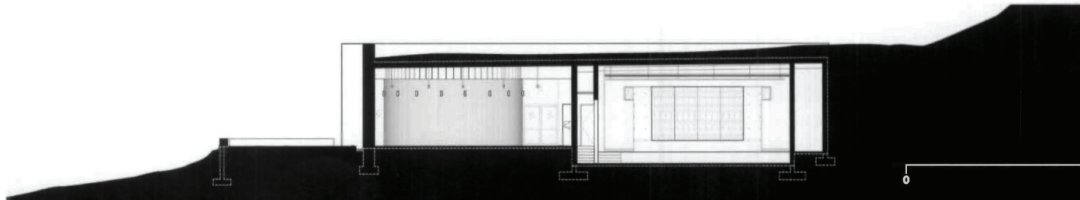
Nk'MIP Desert Cultural Center

Architect: Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden Architects

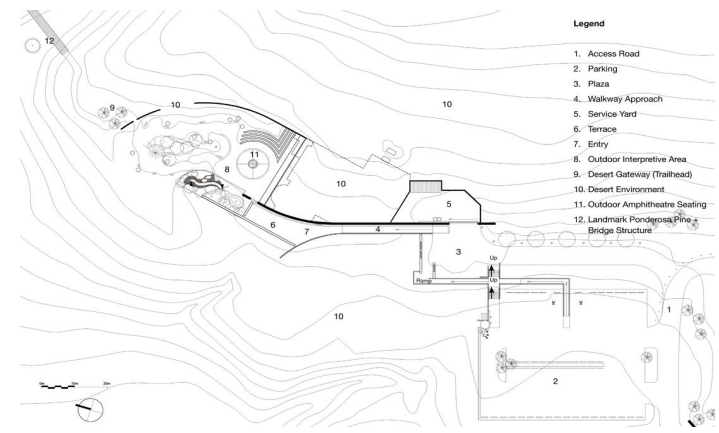
Location: Osoyoos, British Columbia

Area: 12,000 sqft

Year: 2006

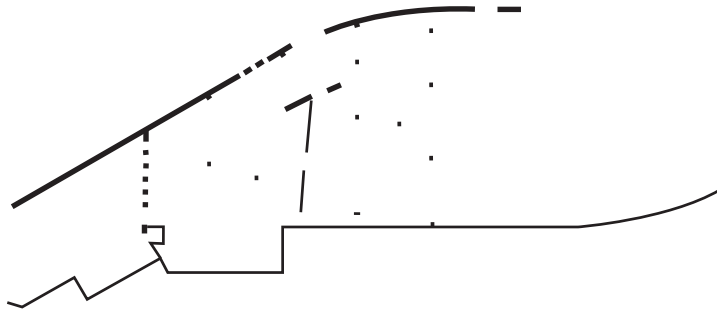


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|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Legend | 4. Washroom | 9. Workshop | 14. Stage | 19. Seating |
| 1. Entry | 5. Administration | 10. Office | 15. Exhibit Gallery | 20. Outdoor Interpretive Area |
| 2. Reception | 6. Service Yard | 11. Storage | 16. Animal Habitat Display | 21. Retention Pond/Animal Hat |
| 3. Gift Shop | 7. Garbage/Recycling | 12. AV Control Room | 17. Demonstration Area | 22. Terrace |
| | 8. Service Room | 13. Lecture/Performance Theatre | 18. Outdoor Amphitheatre | 23. Desert Stream |

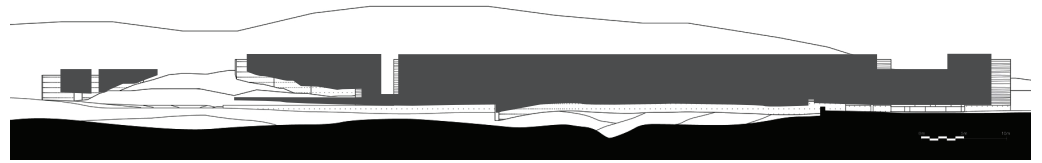


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|--|
| Legend |
| 1. Access Road |
| 2. Parking |
| 3. Plaza |
| 4. Walkway Approach |
| 5. Service Yard |
| 6. Terrace |
| 7. Entry |
| 8. Outdoor Interpretive Area |
| 9. Desert Gateway (Trailhead) |
| 10. Desert Environment |
| 11. Outdoor Amphitheatre Seating |
| 12. Landmark Ponderosa Pine Bridge Structure |

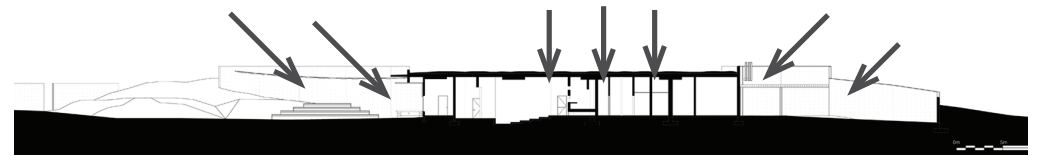
Structure



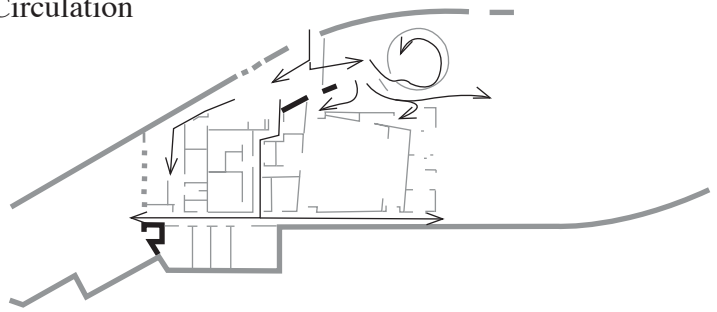
Massing



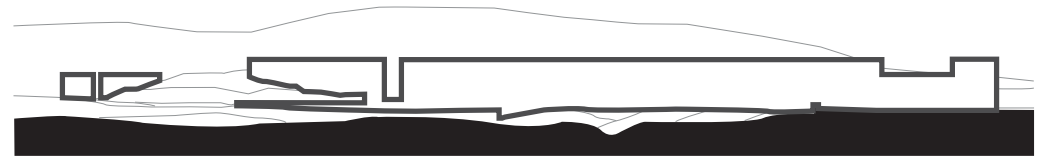
Natural Light



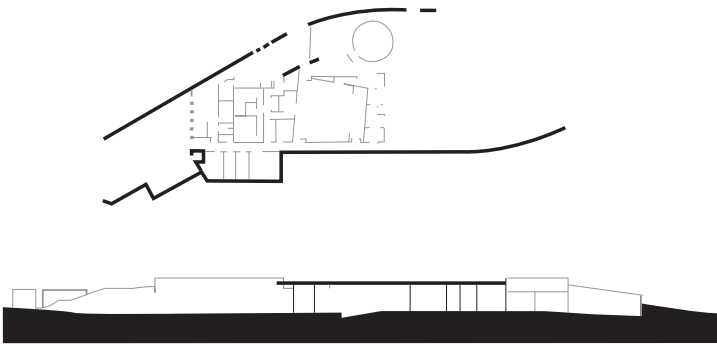
Circulation



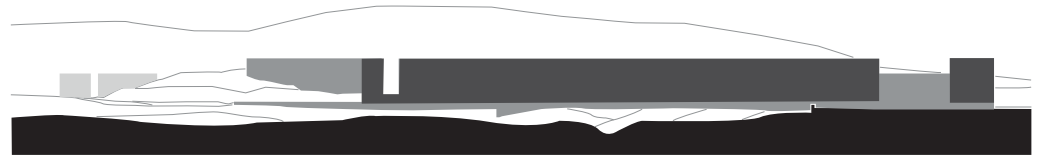
Geometry



Plan to Section



Hierarchy





Programmatic Elements

Location:

Los Angeles, CA

Architect:

Safdie Rabines Architects

area:

7,200 Sq. Ft.

Completion:

2009

Location: Los Angeles

Architect: Safdie Rabines Architects

Area: 7,200 square feet

Completion: 2009

Programmatic Elements

Baldwin Hill Scenic Overlook is an urban state park that rises more than 400 feet above Los Angeles whose development was guided by one word, “unobtrusive” (Howard, 2009). The plan developed for the site included a visitor center, support building, open-air pavilion, a garden, and a network of trails. When entering the project, guests park and follow a trail up a series of three building which mold themselves into the landscape. The first structure visitors arrive at is the visitor center, which contains an ecology exhibit of the site, small theater space,

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook



and meeting rooms. The second structure contains utilitarian spaces such as bathrooms and a kitchen. While the third structure is an outdoor pavilion used for special events. Directly beyond the pavilion is an outdoor amphitheater surrounded by native plants. From here guests can follow the trails up to the overlook which has been sculpted to allow for a dramatic reveal of downtown Los Angeles. From this point they could return to their cars, explore the numerous other trails, or take a series of trails and stairs back down to the city.

Thoughts

I enjoyed this project for its work in educating and creating an ecological recovery for the site. When it was purchased in 2000 by the California State Parks the site was previously planned for residential development. As such the site contained discarded construction materials, was cleared of all vegetation, flattened, and allowed invasive grasses to take control (Howard, 2009). With time the site has been developed into a wonderful park with the recovery of indigenous species, and a series of walking trails with ADA accessibility to engaging structures. These structure caress the natural landforms and gracefully cut into the landscape to benefit from the shared heat gain and loss. In addition the structure's butterfly roof provides shade for the building as well as the walkways. All the forms also utilize operable windows, pivoting glass doors, and clerestories to provide natural ventilation with in

the buildings (Howard, 2009). This project was a success in its work to respect the landscape and work with it for mutual gain. It also worked well with the trail system to encourage people to engage the site and enjoy the natural ecology. These aspects I find to be important to the success of my project due to the Native American Culture's strong relation to nature.

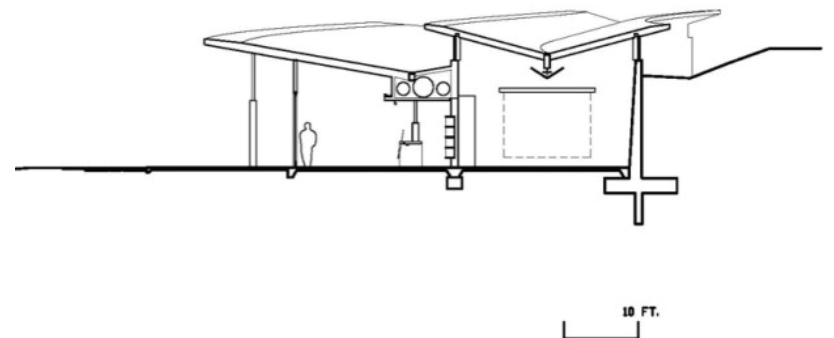
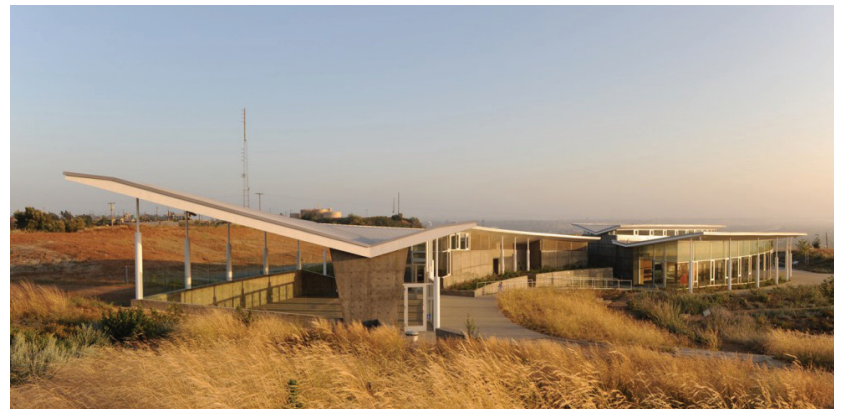
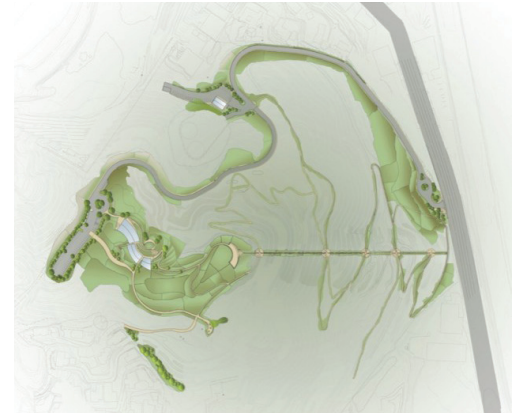
Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook

Architect: Safdie Rabines Architects

Location: Los Angeles, California, USA

Area: 7,200 sqft

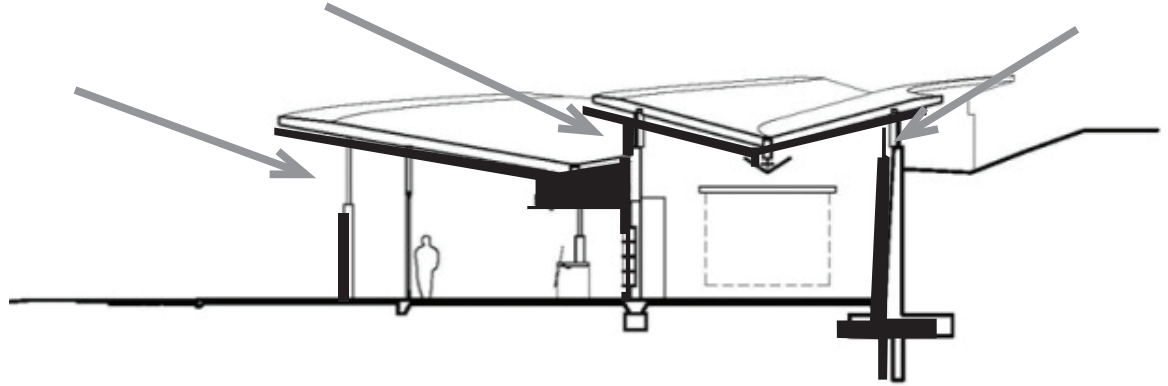
Year: 2009



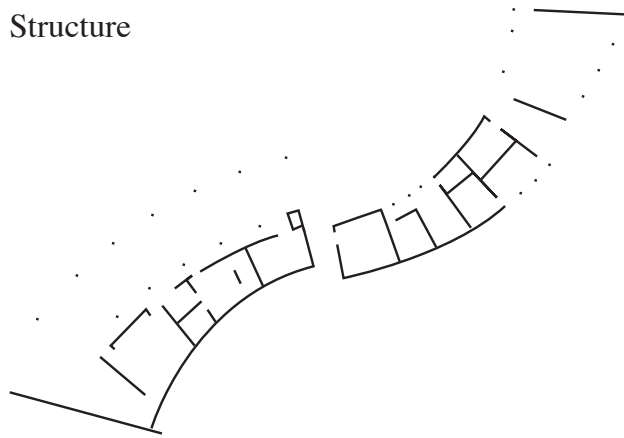
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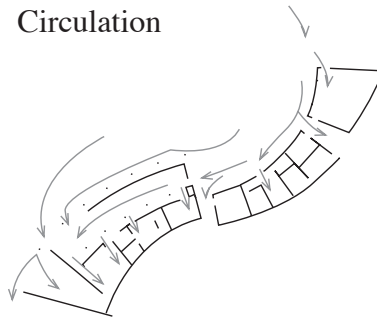
Natural Light



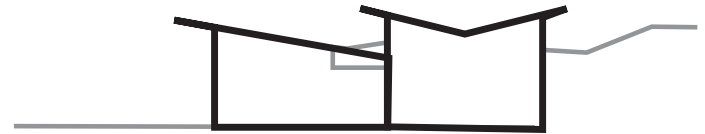
Structure



Circulation



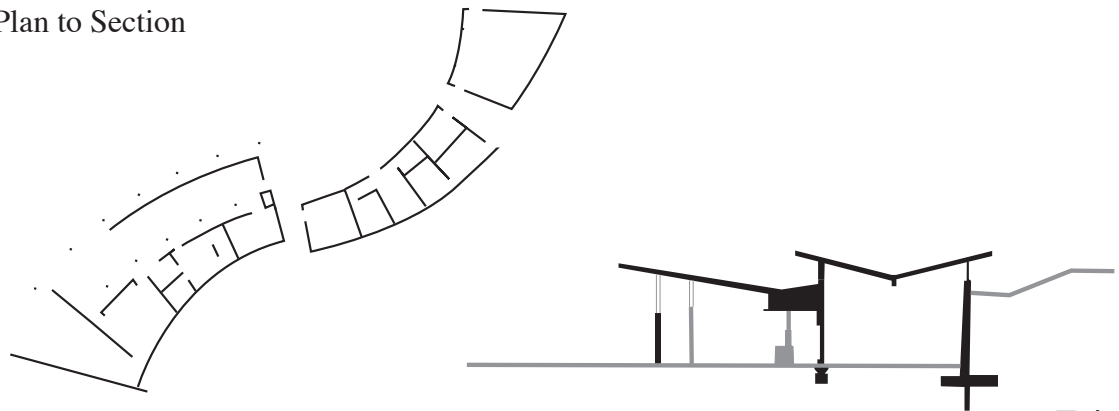
Geometry



Hierarchy



Plan to Section



Historical

Context

In able to understand some of the values I am assigning to community, nature, and site, it is vital to have a historical background in the subject. In this section i will be discussing a quick overview of the progression of the tribes living along the Missouri River in North Dakota, the cultural values of these tribes, and projects similar to my typology and their effect. Starting with the history of the Mandan, Hidasta, and Arikara of the Missouri River Valley.

Their history thrives for many years before encountered any European settlers, but I will be moving us directly to these encounters as my research is concerning the series of events leading up to the present day. Beginning in the early 1700s, these tribes had contact with white traders and specifically in 1738 with La Verendrye, a French explorer who was the first recorded contact with Indians within this territory and more importantly recorded a friendly contact (Schneider, 1990). This hospitality continued for a century even with a large influx of white settlers, traders, and explorers. With intermarriage and support of each other being acceptable and necessary each group worked together and learned from

one another rather than trying to instigate change. Though in 1837 a smallpox epidemic struck the Missouri river basis taking nearly 2/3 of the Mandan population and slightly less of the Hidasta (Schneider,1990). This loss of population and threat from other tribes forced the two tribes to move from the Heart River and establish a new village up the Missouri called Like-a-Fishhook. They were later joined by the Arikara in 1866, making the village a trading stop for steamboats and a diverse cultural center, as these three tribes have independent cultures and language. At this time, though, a number of settlers continued to enter into the territory and negotiations begin to spring up for land deals.

Many of the tribes around the late 1800s were making treaties for the reservations, though a conflict arose in Minnesota and worked its way to North Dakota, becoming the only army encounter to happen in North Dakota but one that lead to much distrust and conflict. This began with a treaty between the Dakota and the state of Minnesota that failed and led to small pockets of violence though the majority of the Dakotas made a point to leave in peace (Schneider, 1990). Army action was subsequently taken

to bring order to the unruly Dakota Indians, which resulted in the Battle of Whitestone Hill. The battle was brought upon an innocent hunting party unrelated to the acts and resulted in their hunting parties massacre. This led to a congressional act for the removal of the Dakota Indian tribes from Minnesota, creating concerns of hostility between the tribes and traders causing a flood of soldiers to pour into the territories, along with the construction of numerous forts near by Indian settlements. Though concern is all that resulted as Indian hostility largely remained directed at other Indians. Events did occur though it was largely soldiers defending Indians they traded with, which eventually lead to events of hostility toward the settlers in turn attracting military attention. This tension between the military and the native people reached its peak in 1864 when a group of five thousand natives were attacked by general Sully. This was another example of hostility resultant of poor communication since the multiple tribes fleeing from General Sully were under the belief that his only goal was to eliminate the Native American Population (Schneider, 1990). At this point Natives were seen by whites as uneducated

and ruthless people, making their prosecution acceptable and their reform necessary.

Transforming the reservations into places of reform, limiting the languages they could speak, rituals and ceremonies they could perform, and even gardens at times weren't allowed.

As the government, educators, and missionaries got more involved with the reservations the more we see a trend of assimilation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was established and the agents took control of the reservations, enforcing the acts of Congress. One the first enacted was the Allotment Act which gave a parcel of land to each Native on the reservation and sold off the rest of the land to fund the community. This act resulted in whites owning much of the reservation land and the Native American plots growing small and divided as they were shared amongst the generations of the family (Schneider 1990). This type of living and enforcement of assimilation continued until 1934, when John Collier's ideas were passed in the Reorganization Act. The act called for four things: a stop of reservation land sales; strengthen tribal government; establish a secure economy, and encourage Indian religion,

language, and culture (Schneider 1990). This Act was taken up by the Three Affiliated Tribes and made little noticeable change returning the government again to assimilation in 1953 when Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 (Schneider 1990). Establishing a process to eliminate all reservations and tribal programs though in 1975 before too much was removed Congress did return sovereignty to the Native Americans, luckily before any ND tribal agreements were negated. The Self-Determination and Education Act restored Native American control, allowing them to request funds from the BIA and allocate them as they would to their programs (Schneider 1990). This system still in place today is where we stand with tribal and government relations though Native Americans continue to struggle and rightfully so since the culture and society has been ravaged ever since the government has placed their will over the people.

Even now with all these years of sovereignty there remain problems with assimilation in schools and a lack of opportunity within the reservation. In addition many members of the tribe continue to mistrust whites

and their government while many others embrace a life within American society. So what can be done to help a group with such diverse opinions of their place in the overarching society? As I have stated in my research, I see healing and strengthening happening in communities. In the next section I will be discussing the values of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara which I believe are still relevant today.

In my research I have found values unique to Native American populations which I believe call for a strong community. The first is stories the tribes use to retain their history, ceremonies, and beliefs. Community relations keep this record alive because the stories are passed down from generation to generation becoming an opportunity for others of the culture to grow in their heritage. Language is the next item I found important; even though the three affiliated tribes speak different languages, they are filled with similarities. Either way, language is an identifier of the people, and only a small percentage still know the language. Establishing a community is a way for this language to spread and be used in context. Tribes of this area also showed great selflessness and a willingness

to give. This generosity helped them survive throughout their history and is a value which could go a long way in American society. Letting generosity help improve the community image within the American society. Finally is the extended family system seen in the tribal history and also still seen amongst some tribal members today. This care and generosity for one another is what kept the tribes respectful of each other and so successful in this harsh landscape. Through a shared world view and mutual respect of each other and their environment, these tribes lived generally peaceful lives.

The broad worldview shared by tribes of this area is a unique connection between the multiple clans of the area. Though as stated before, all tribes are unique in their own ways so I will be looking at overarching themes. Tribes of this area believe that the environment around them is host to living entities which they could learn from or influence. Many stories relate events and lessons learned through stories taught or learned from “other-than-human-persons” (Nabokov, 2006). For these reasons, and the belief that the entities and the native populations were interconnected for better or worse, the

tribes of the area would honor and respect the other forces and lives of the earth. As well, tribes of this area had deity figures and beliefs in creators which had brought their people to this land and taught them life skills or saved their tribes from disasters. The deities and natural entities are remembered and proclaimed in stories, rituals, and self-sacrifice. Men of the tribe would commit themselves to fasting and self-mutilation to show humbleness to the deities or living entities, to maintain good relations, and gain knowledge. This would be repeated until an entity had spoken to or passed knowledge onto the person, which is how the people discovered many of the sacred lands and objects of their history (Schneider 1994). The land, its forces, and creatures have had religious history tied into the Native American culture, making it difficult to think of the land in the terms of the settlers. Cheif Robbie Dick explained it in this manner: “It is very hard to explain to the white people what we mean by land is part of our life” Dick said, facing the certain loss of the wetlands where Indians had hunted and trapped for more than five thousand years. “Were like rocks and trees” (Nabokov, 2006). This passage showing

their humbleness in the belief that they are a part of the land no better or worse than any other entity.

After gathering a basic knowledge of the values and history, I attempted to find modern architectural piece that seemed to embody these ideas, relate to my building typology, and represent more than one tribe of Native people. In my search I found a number of architectural works, developed within and outside of reservations, embodying these values. Of these I found three that stand out; the Daybreak Star Center, Pyramid Lake Cultural Center and Museum, and Minneapolis American Indian Center.

The Daybreak Star Center is designed for the Indian people of the nation located within Seattle, WA. The building was designed from Black Elk's Vision, explained by Krinsky (1996) as a "vision of a sheltering tree and daybreak start dropping to earth rooting. From its single stem sprouted four differently colored blossoms, each now associated with the four principal architectural divisions." Each of these divisions represent a cultural region: the Pacific Coast and

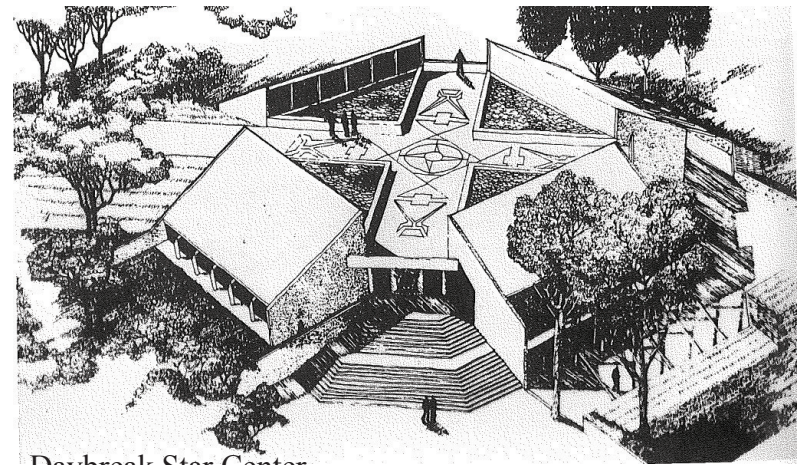
Alaska, the Plains and Basin, the Southwest, and the Eastern woodlands. The building itself containing culture and history from across the nation but not identifying solely with any one tribe. Also, within the building the foundation offers not only a museum and gallery but a preschool program, social service agencies, and vocational preparation. The project has been a success over the years in serving and educating the people of Seattle.

The Pyramid Lake Cultural Center is mainly a museum for the Paiute Tribe located in Nixon, NV. This project caught my eye because of its typology but more importantly its design. The design was done by Dennis Numkena and I feel Krinsky (1996) explained the design circumstances well: "In absence of a usable historic model, the architect designed a building accessible to Native people of many nations; rooted in the land, it also aspires. One of the most imaginative designs in contemporary Amerindian architecture." I personally enjoyed the design and its use of the site's resources to create a connection to the people and the land through the reoccurring stone on the inside and out as well as the dynamic physical form. A

wonderful project that showed innovation when looking for a present day embodiment of the Native peoples culture.

The Minneapolis American Indian Center is a multi-tribal center located within Minneapolis, MN. This center was built to be an Urban Indian resource, and the building shows this in its use of more modern materials and design. I liked this decision and thought it was accepting of the realities of the Native American cultural trends. Beyond the design, the building serves its community with galleries, a museum, gather spaces, social services, education, and much more. Even proudly boasting 10,000 annual members utilizing or participating at the facility. (Minneapolis American Indian Center, 2009). This center has helped bring together a struggling community and I applaud it, as well as seek guidance from it since it embodies many of the hopes and goals for my own project.

With this knowledge I hope some decisions made in my research and design seem more clear. As well, I hope this quick overview was enough to begin to understand the progression of this old and ever-growing culture.



Daybreak Star Center



Pyramid Lake Cultural Center



Minneapolis American Indian Center

Goals of the

thesis

The academic

My thesis idea became based around a problem I had seen in my own town and this process has led me on a highly academic journey. Even in the beginning the question has required a deeper look into a culture I had only slightly known. Making my ability to design for this project based around an understanding of a world different from my own, a situation not uncommon to the academics or profession of architecture. Making for myself it a goal to gain a higher understanding of a new culture and put to the test my ability to translate this information into a built form. I also look at this as my ability to create architecture as poetry or art in that it has meaning and a message behind its forms and my decisions, which I believe tends to be a more academic question as time allows for more consideration of these aspects within school. To achieve these goal I will utilize all that I have learned as a student and bring together all the aspects of design I have learned throughout my time at NDSU. Taking the project to higher levels of detail in structure, material connections, environment control systems, and the

presentation of the whole to be a representation of myself as a student of architecture and future practitioner.

The Professional

I believe my thesis project will be a useful resource for the profession, as it is exploring issues which are becoming more frequently visited in architectural projects. My research, history and references will become a jumping point in pursuing a project of this manner. I also believe that my project will benefit the profession by looking at representing Native American populations within metropolitan environments. Addressing the change in culture and need for architecture to adapt to the modern Amerindian culture. Ultimately being utilized by the profession for the summarized research and history, case study examples, and resource list.

Personal Goals

This project will be my main connection from the academic world to the professional, and I see this as a consolidation of my abilities. Through the project I will show my ability to research and understand a client unfamiliar to myself, interpret that information, and represent it in a meaningful yet functional manner. Showing an understanding of material connections, passive systems, and structure through an understandable presentation while simultaneously showing my ability with my chosen design software. The project becoming a representation of my abilities and perspectives on architectural design.

Site



The Chief Looking's Earthlodge Village was occupied by the Nu eta, (We the People) now known as the Mandan Indian Tribe, during the period 1675-1780. This was a summer village. During the winter the Mandan lived in smaller houses on the river bottom.

The main village is located on a flat promontory linked to the main body of the high Missouri River Terrace by a narrow neck of land above the east bank of the Missouri River.

The original village site is marked by 43 earthlodge depressions, and a number of cache pit mouth depressions. The site is enclosed on three sides by a fortification ditch. Evidence suggests that six or seven towns were occupied simultaneously by the Mandan Indians.

In 1930, the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District acquired the Chiefs Looking Earthlodge Village Site. In 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps conducted an archeological investigation site. The CCC constructed circular, dome shaped reproductions of three excavated lodges. All three earthlodges have been destroyed by fire.

Historical Information provided by Bismarck Parks and Recreation District

Chief Looking's Earthlodge Village



Site Characteristics

The site is a prominent natural environment within the city of Bismarck. Kept in excellent condition by the Bismarck Parks and Recreation district, containing some of the most wonderful views in the area. Left in a natural condition, letting prairie grass, wildflowers, and other vegetation grow freely in large portions of the site.

Views

The views from the site are considered some of the most beautiful in the city, being the reason many citizens visit the site. From the site there are wonderful views overlooking the Missouri River and the city of Mandan.

Built Features

The site itself has no built structures other than minimal paved roads, walking paths, and gravel paths, though the backside of the site is lined by a housing development and not far from commercial developments. Urban development is coming up around the site but this area remains a place of tranquility within the city.

Light Quality

The site is mostly open with few trees, making the site generally covered in sun during the day. Being located on a hill also limits the amount of shadows and always makes for a wonderful view of the sunset.



Wind

Since there is a limited number of trees and it is located on the top of a hill, windy days feel worse than other areas in the city.

Human Characteristics & Condition

The site sees a number of visitors coming to enjoy the view, explore the historic site, ride the mountain bike trails, or walk the trails which also connect to the river. Despite the activity at the site, it still remains a very natural site, especially along the paths and biking trails where prairie grass and wildflowers grow uninhibited. The only item seeming to be affected has been some of the gravel paths which are becoming washed out. Beyond that the only thing left is the intentional rough state of the mountain biking trails.

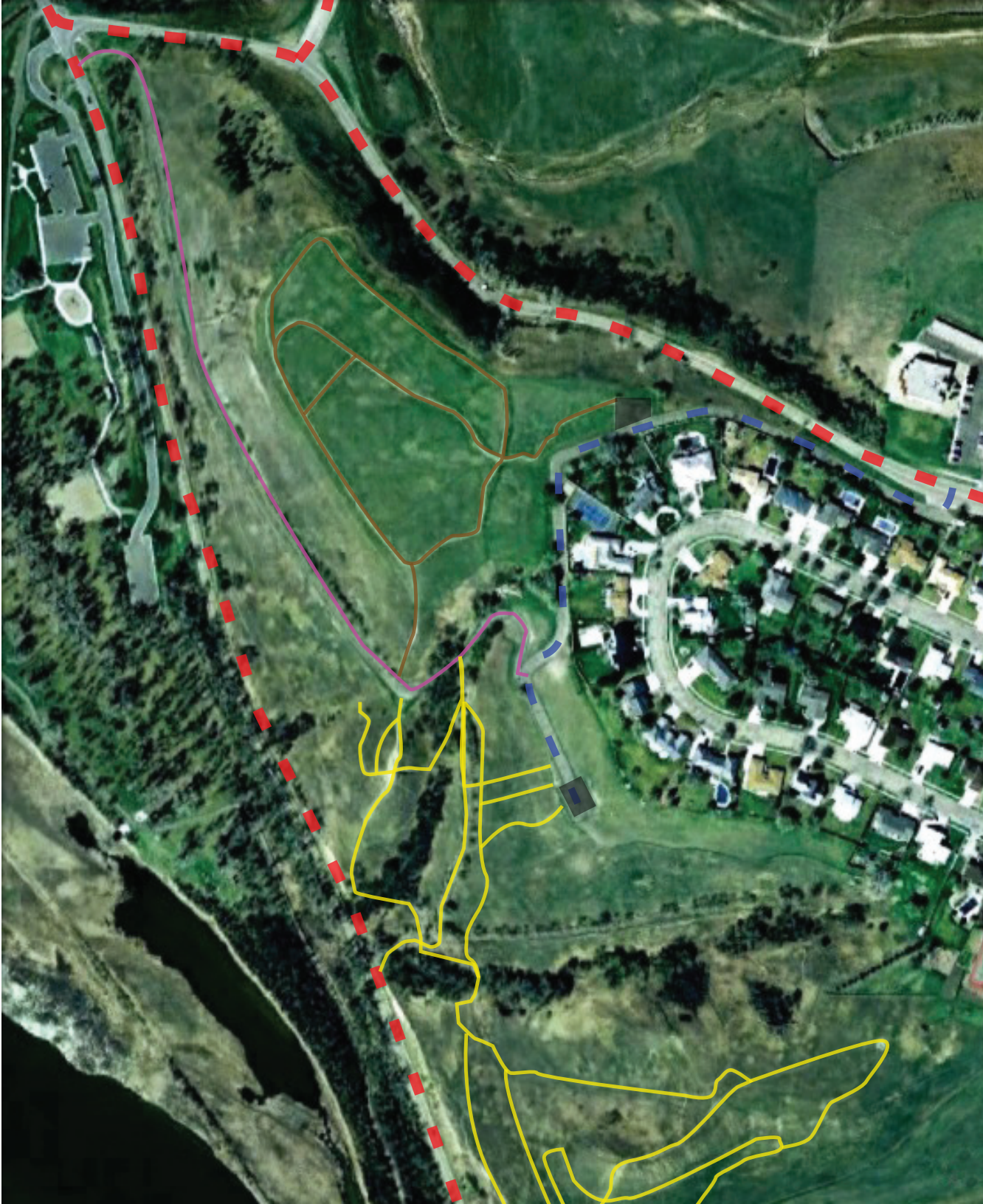
Utilities

The site currently has no utilities wired in at the moment, though connections to the grid are not far off. The main issue is in what utilities and lumens are allowed on and near the historical site. I will have to make some exceptions as I have no way of negotiating the value of making these exceptions.

Vehicular Traffic

Traffic on the site is limited and the roads within the site are short, though the site does see traffic on a regular basis. The connecting road is a secondary in terms of the roads in the city but still sees high amounts of traffic with significantly more traffic in summer in comparison to winter. Traffic noise remains low as the majority of the road runs below the site allowing the hill to reflect much of the sound.





Site Paths



Primary Road



Road in Site



Gravel Path



Walking Path



Bike Trail



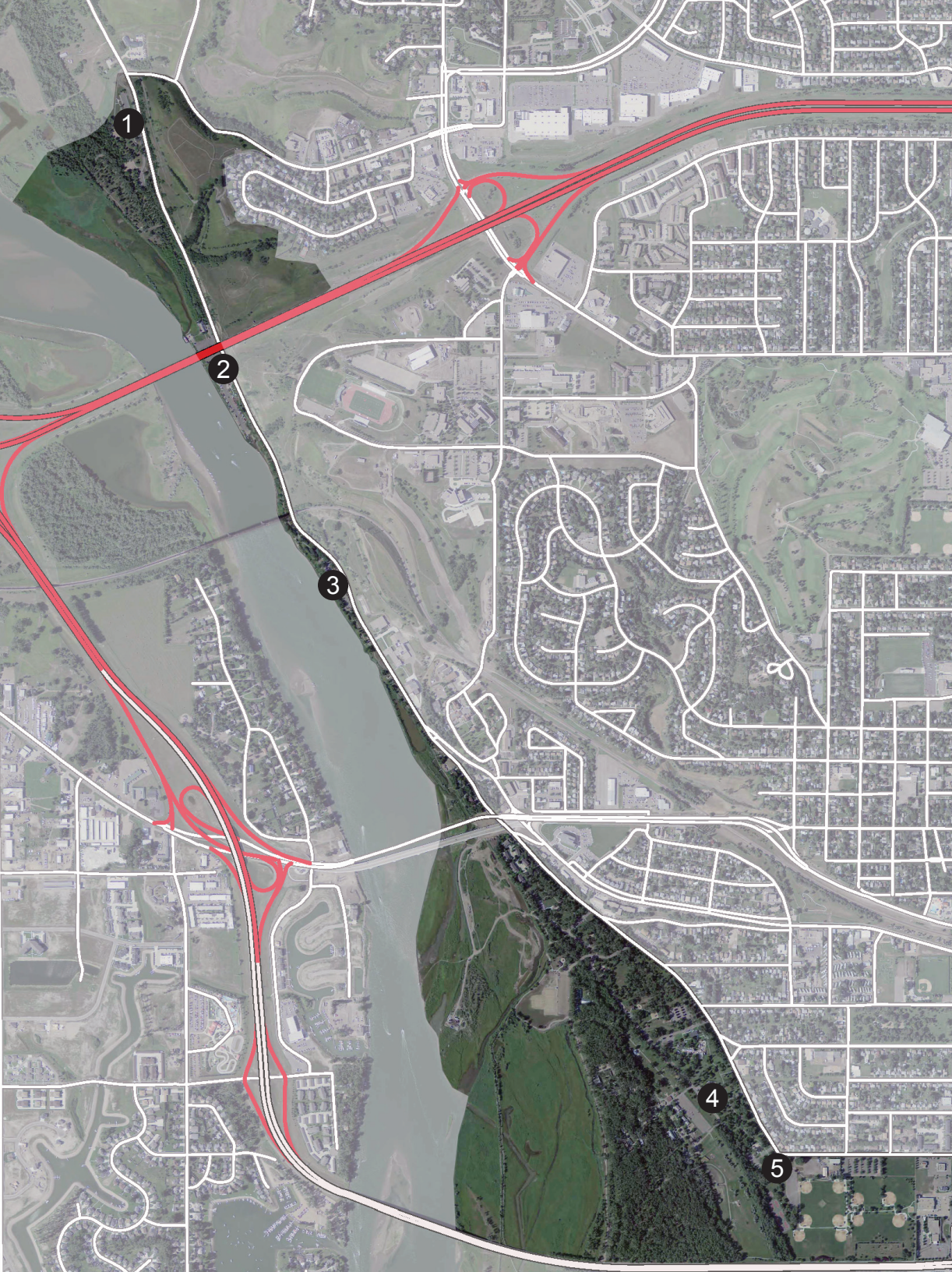












Sculptures

Along the trails of the river are a number of sculptures and installations relevant to the history of the river basin. Some of these are re-creations of historic figures and tools while others are artistic interpretations of the areas cultural past. These interpretive sculptures are installments from the United Tribes Technical College's art students and a gateway to their people's cultural past. Making a wonderful addition to an already beautiful trail with my site being the start or end to a cultural and historical journey along this beautiful river trail.

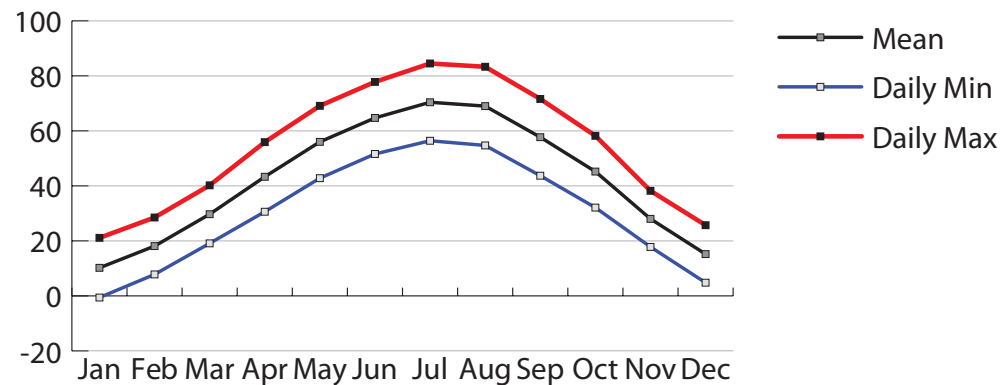


Climate

Diagrams

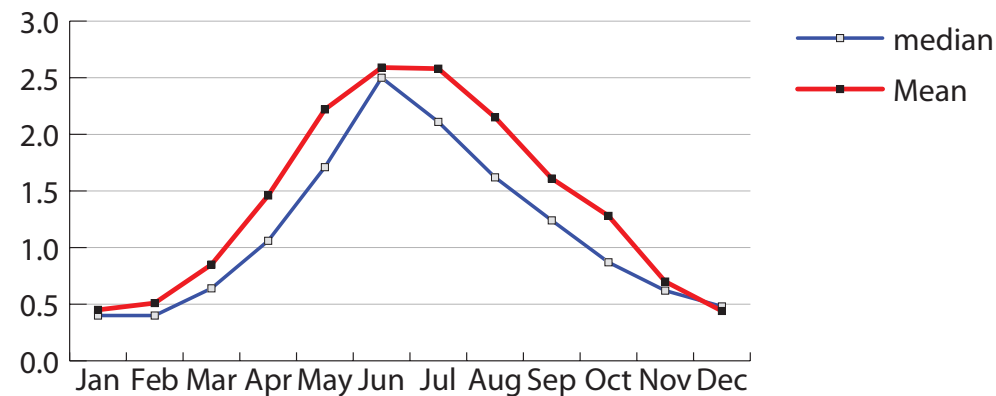
Temperature

Fahrenheit



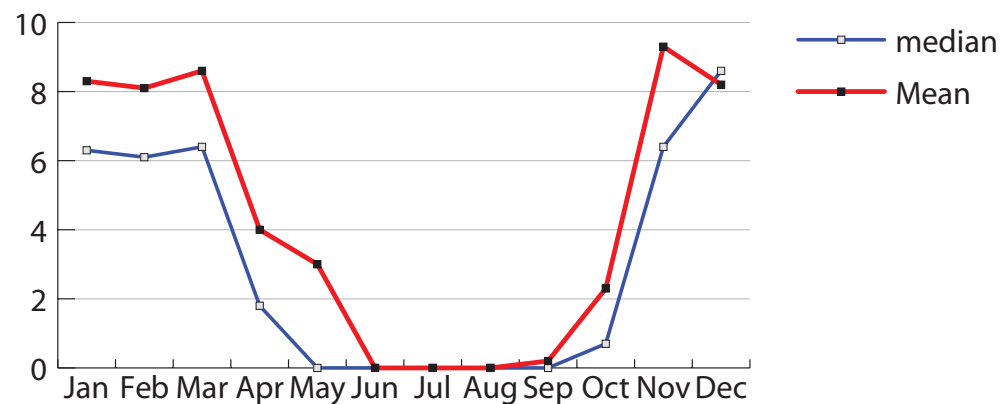
Precipitation

(Rain)Inches

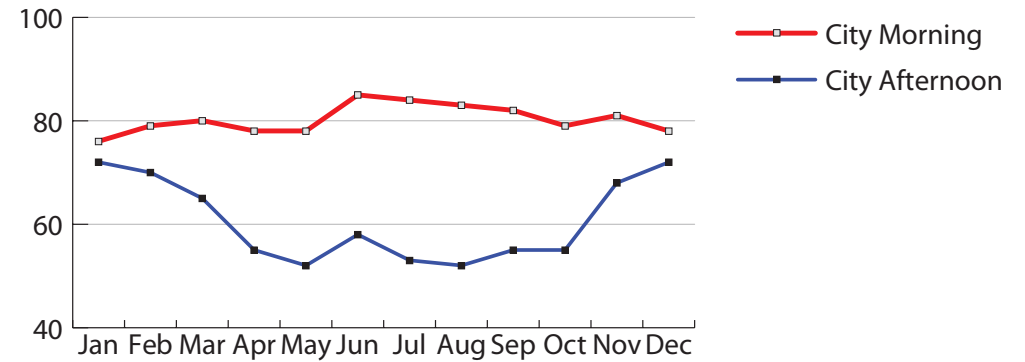


Precipitation

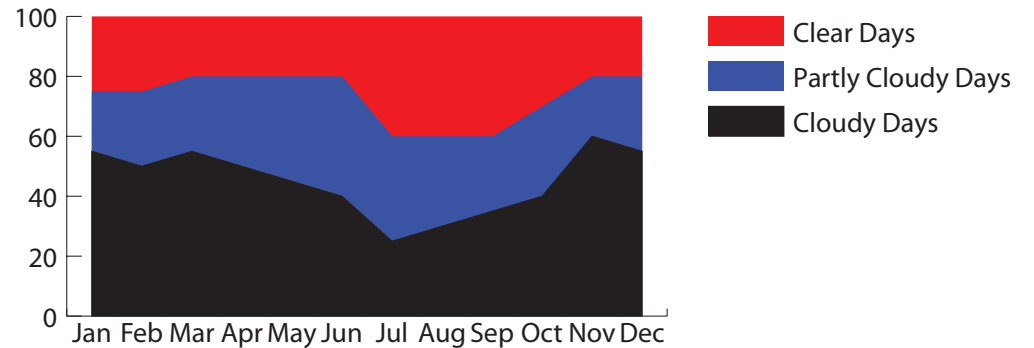
(Snow)Inches



Humidity Percent

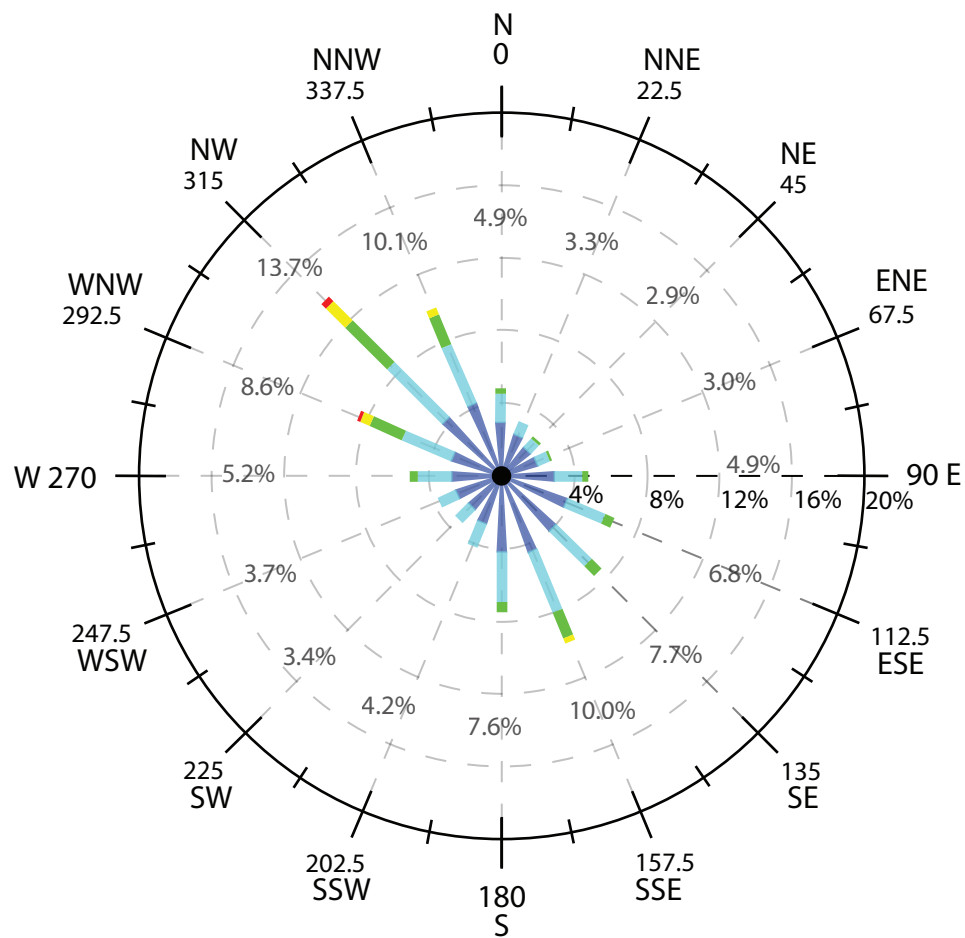


Cloud Cover Percent

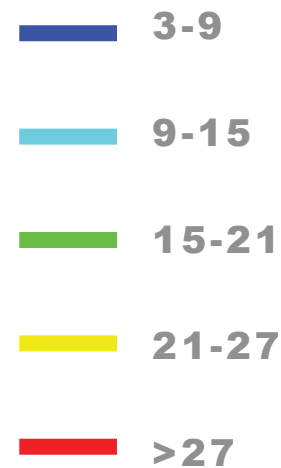


North Dakota State Climate Office

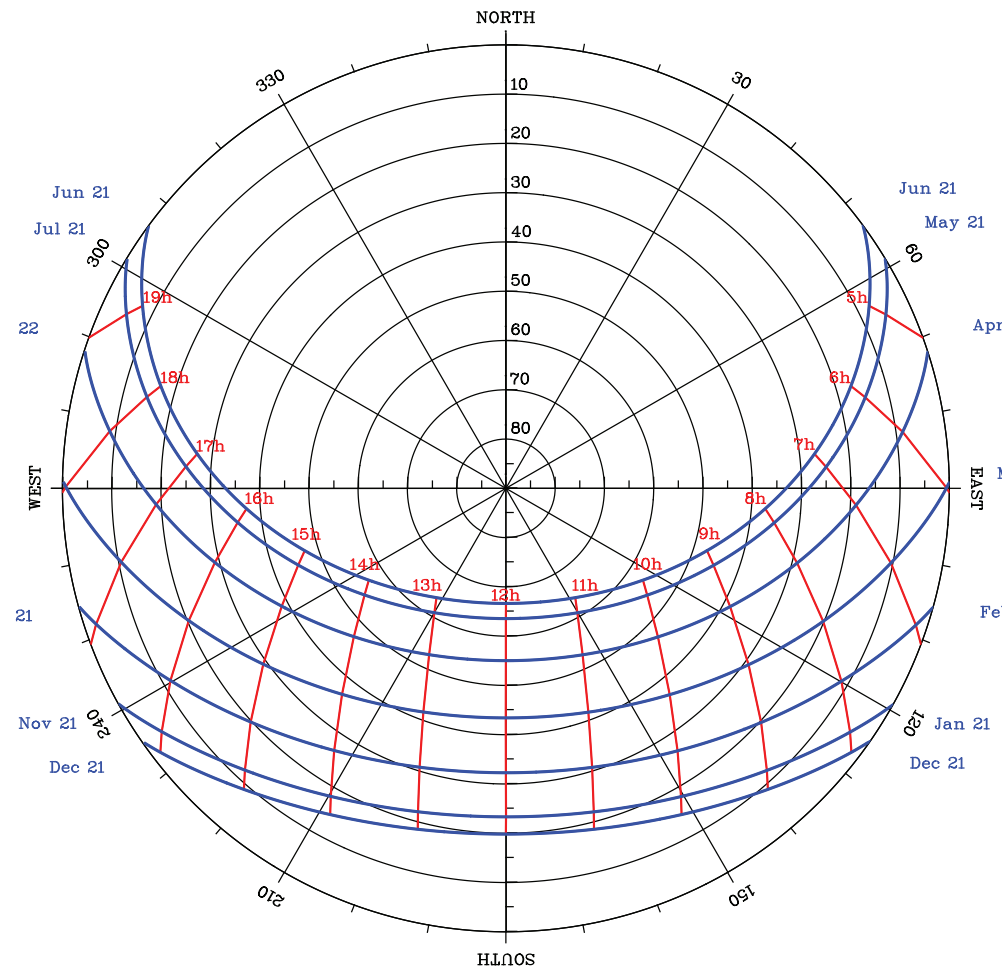
North Dakota State Climate Office supplied the data for temperature, snow, rain, and wind graphs, with the data coming from the Bismarck Municipal AP weather station with a sampling from 1971 to 2000.



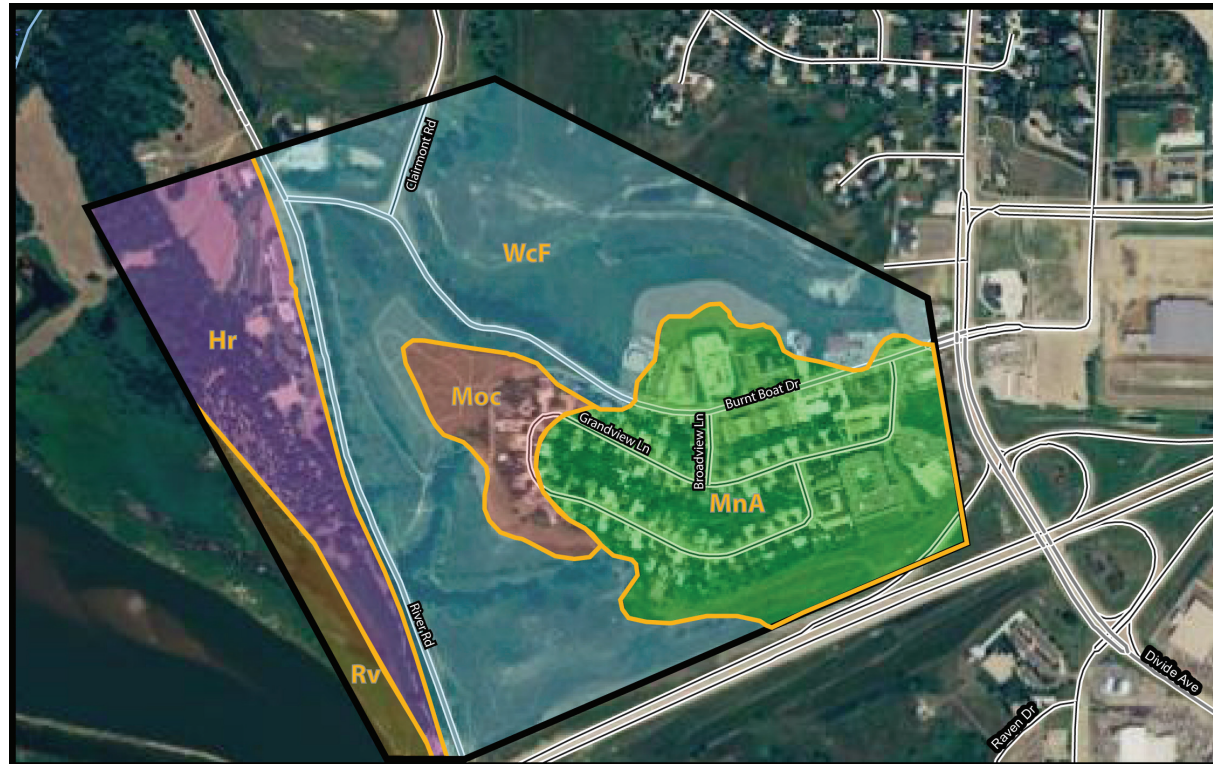
Avg Wind Speed (mph)



Sun path Diagram



Soil Map



WcF

Werner Complex
15 to 35 percent slopes

MoC

Mandan - Linton Silt Loams
6 to 9 percent slopes

MnA

Mandan Silt Loam
0 to 3 percent slopes

Hr

Havrelon Silt Loam
0 to 2 percent slopes

Rv

Riverwash

Natural Resource Conservation Service

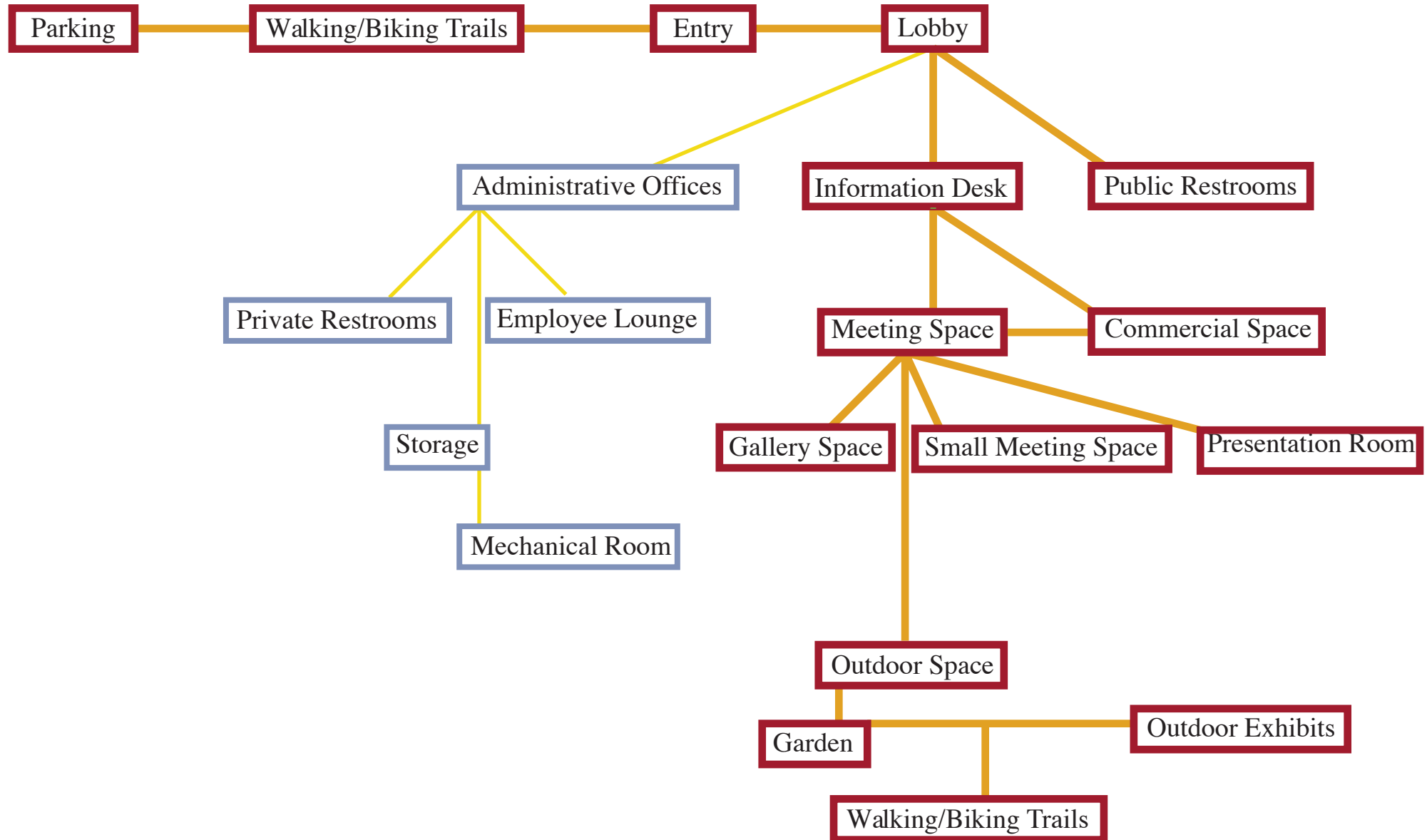
Supplied the data for the soil map and soil information.

www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov

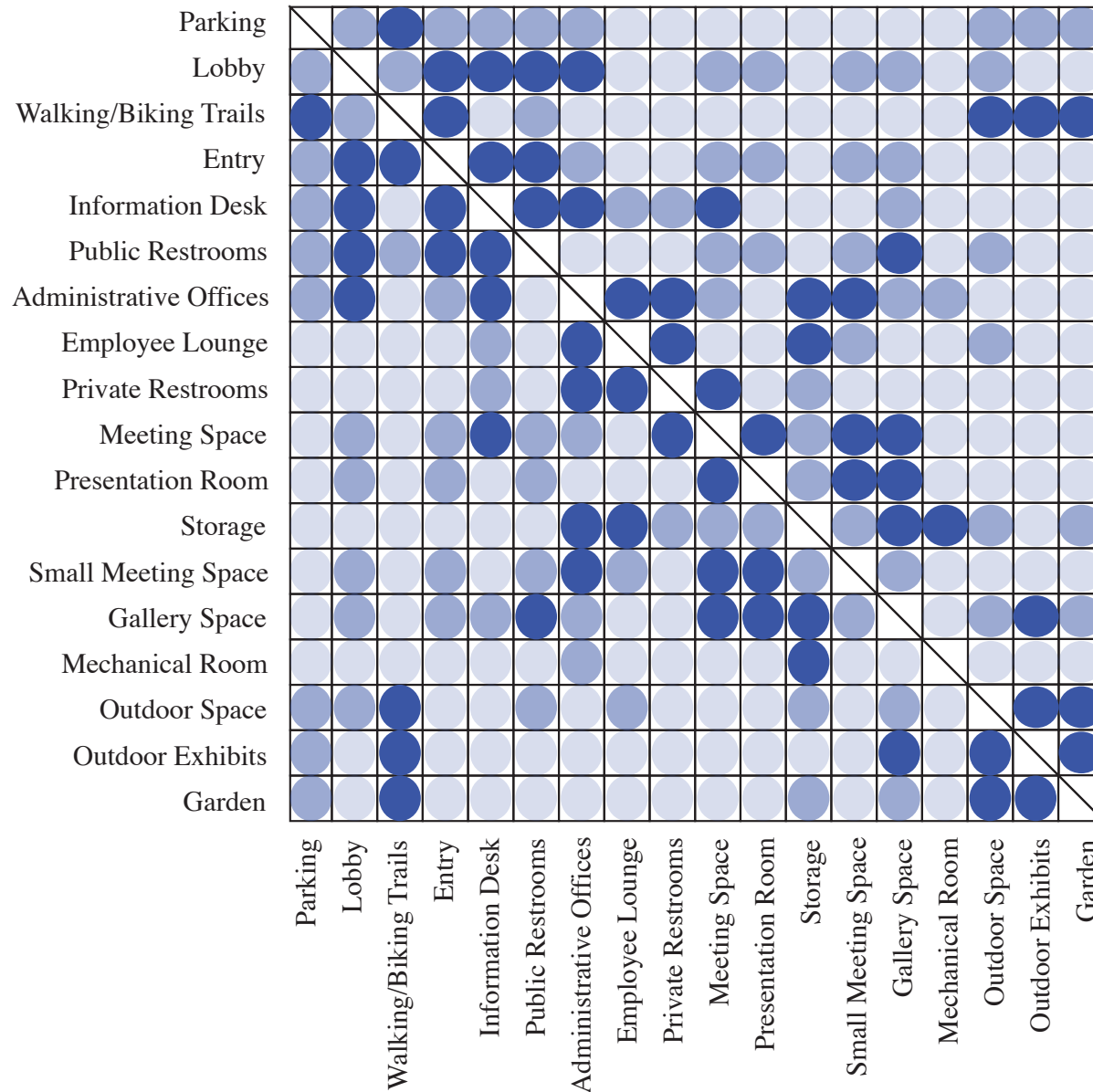
Programmatic

Requirements

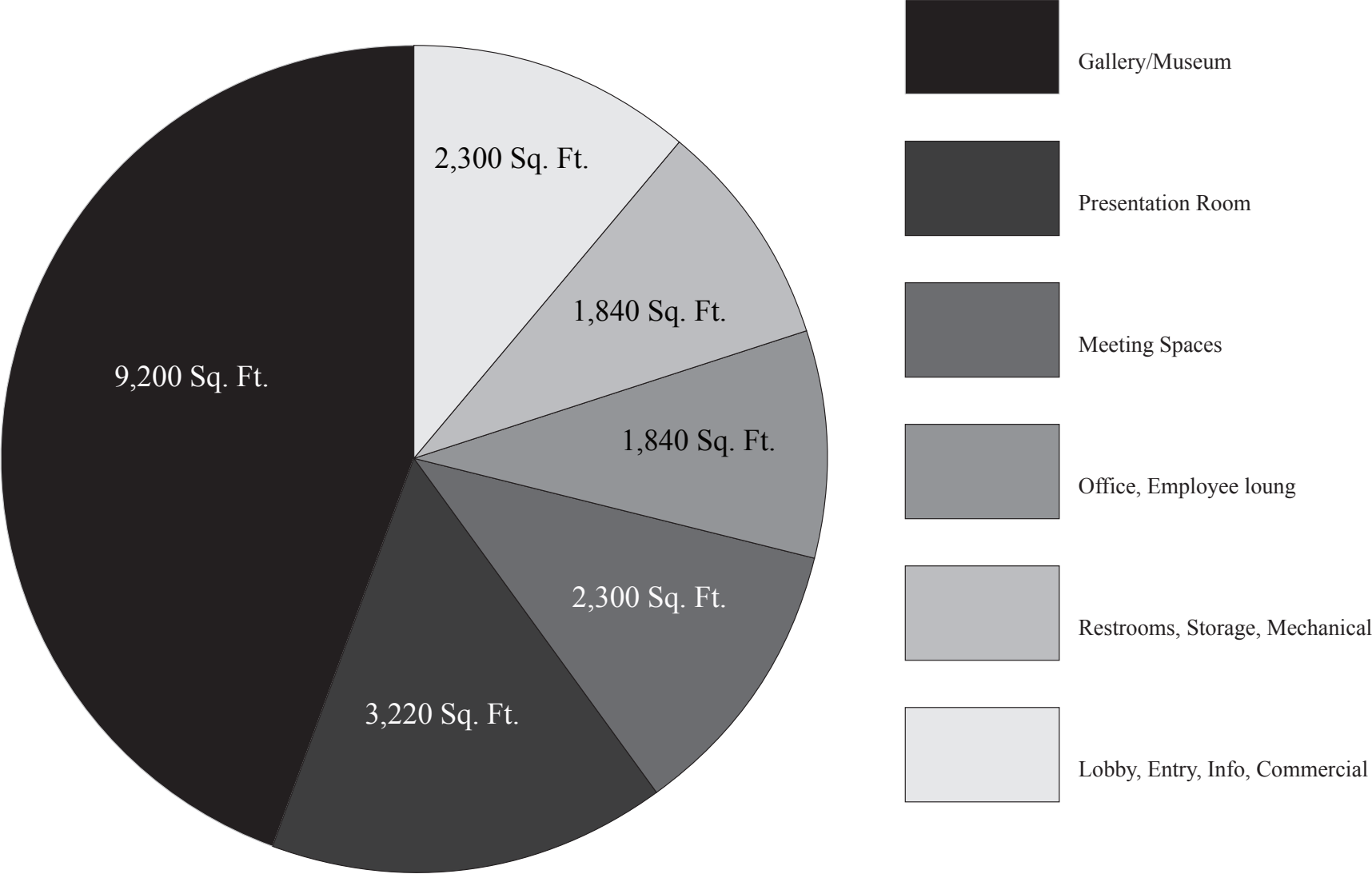
Interaction Net



Interaction Matrix

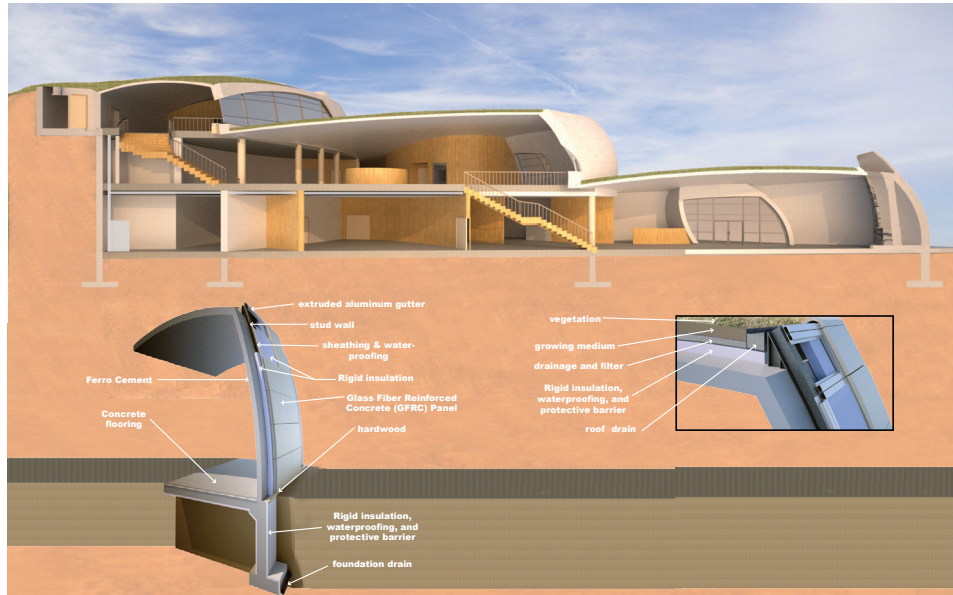


Program - 23,000 Sq. Ft.



Design

Architecture and Cultural Definition

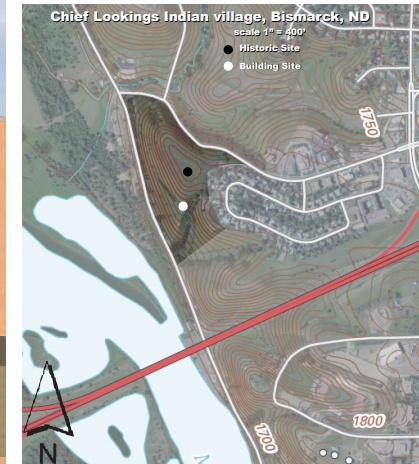


In my thesis I investigated the role of architecture in representing and retaining a culture through its inherent characteristic of being a symbol. In my investigation I focused on the Native American populations within the metropolitan area of Bismarck, North Dakota. Looking to create an American Indian Center which would celebrate the past and present cultures of North Dakota's largest minority group. In this task I strived to develop an artifact sensitive to the local Native American Cultural groups and develop a potential to become a symbol of its continued growth.

In effort to achieve this I researched the values and stories of the multiple tribes within the area looking for shared values and beliefs which might drive my building. In this process I found one such story which told of the beginning of their tribe, how man and deity formed the landscape of the area. In this story man learns the importance of hills and valleys as a tools for survival. This story along with the sites history and physical context inspired a design around a relation to the landscape. Leading to a design which flowed with the land, working to recreate the experience of discovering the landscape. This relation with the landscape can also be a universal tie between all cultures allowing the building to not be tribal specific and relatable to the whole community.

Within the building I developed a program around celebrating the past and present cultures of the areas Native American population. Being a place of community as well as a place of civic involvement, cultural arts, and a historic resource. Striving to bring together the community through cooperation, education, and experience.

ARCH 772 Design Thesis,
Spring Semester 2012
John Nelson



Presentation Boards

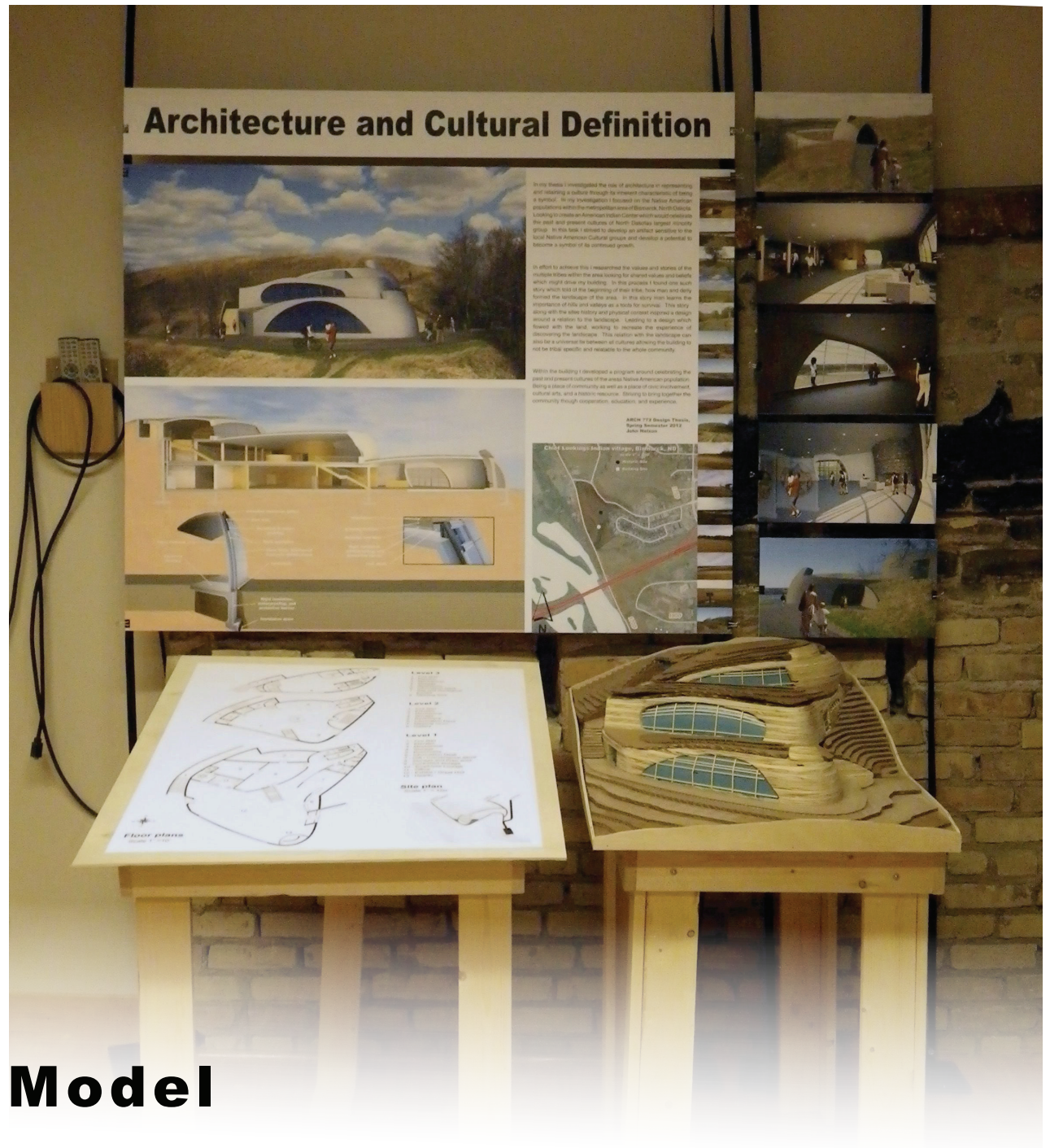
In my thesis I investigated the role of architecture in representing and retaining a culture through architectures inherent characteristic of being a symbol. In my investigation I focused on the Native American population within the metropolitan area of Bismarck, North Dakota. Looking to create an American Indian Center which would celebrating the past and present culture of North Dakotas largest minority group. In this task I strived to develop an artifact sensitive to the Native American Culture that had the potential to become a symbol of its continued growth.

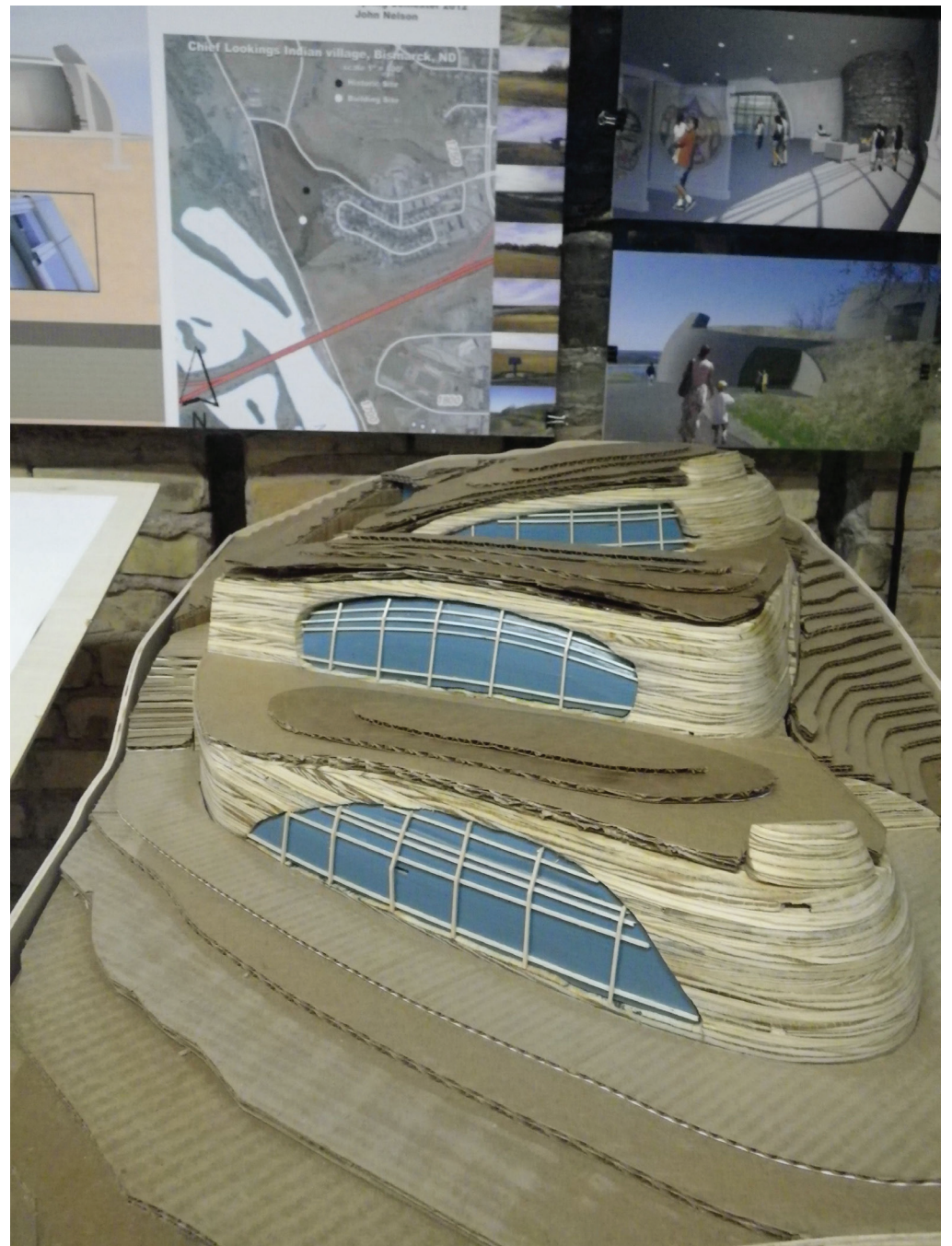
In effort to achieve this I researched the values and stories of the multiple tribes within the area looking for shared values and beliefs which might drive my building. In this process I found one such story which told of the beginning of Native American culture and how the landscape was formed. In this story “man” learns the importance of hills and valleys as a tools for survival. This inspired me as the site is defined by its contours and this inherent attribute could be celebrated by all tribal groups and community members. Leading me to design my building around the flow of the land, working to recreate the experience of discovering the landscape.

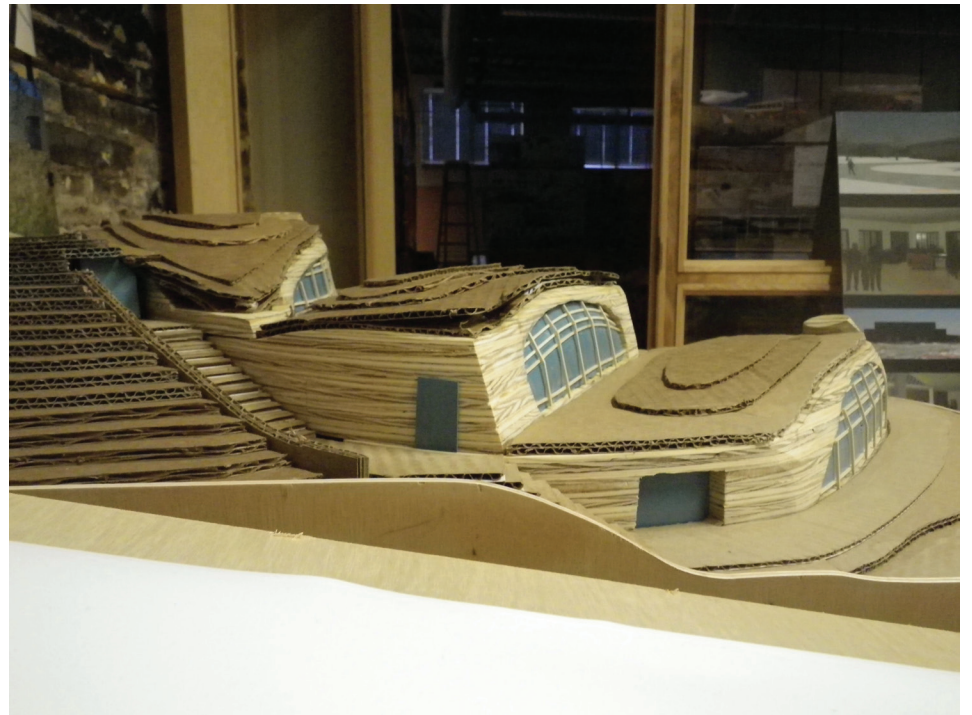
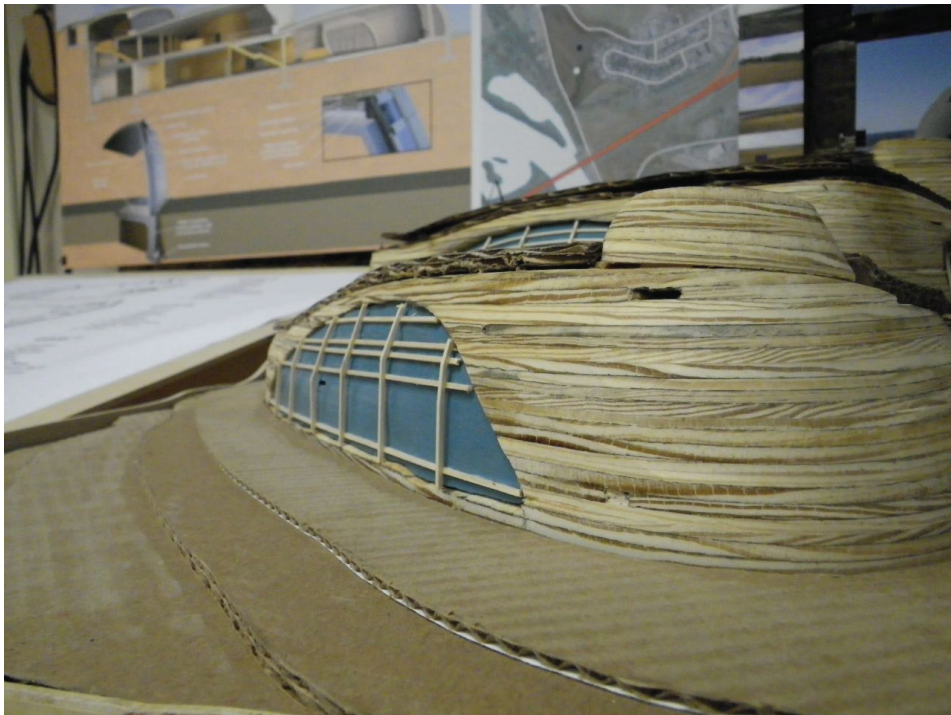
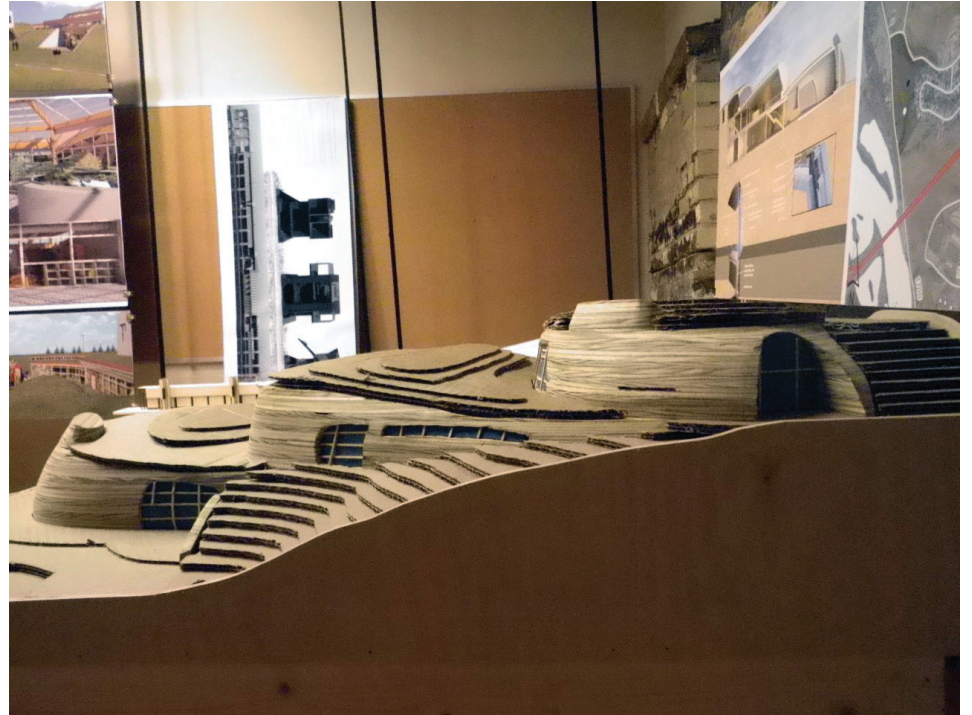
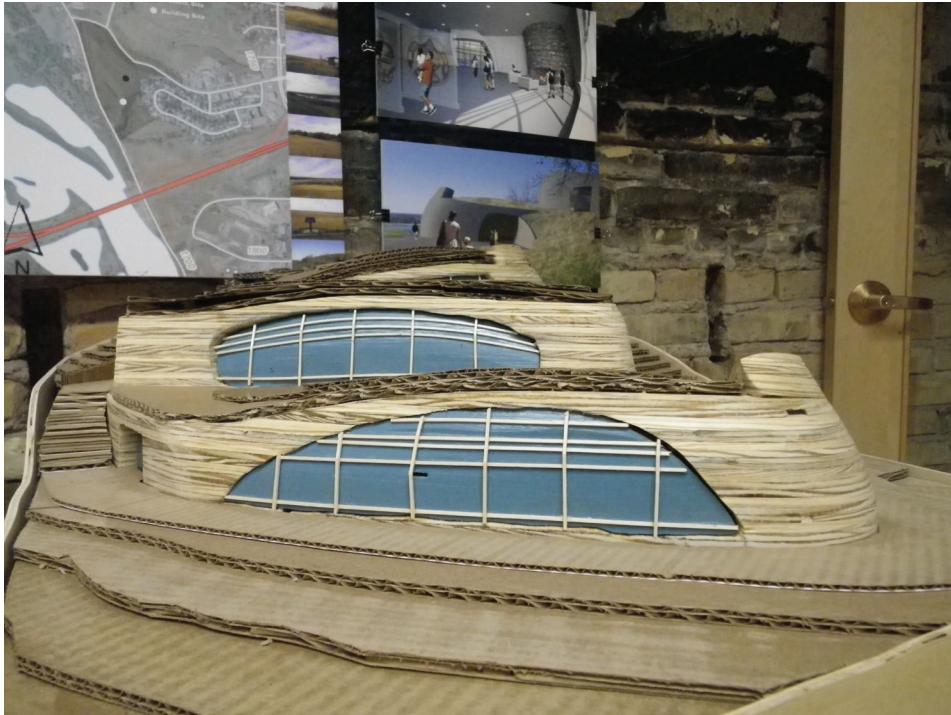
Within the building I developed a program around celebrating the past and present culture of the areas Native American Culture. Being a resource for the people within the community for education, cultural arts, and historic context. Striving to bring together the community though education, experience, and community.

The boards were presented on foam core and hung from the ceiling using a strap system with the floor plans and model being presenting at the base. The floor plans were drawn at a 1" - 10' scale, with the site plan at 1" - 150', and the model at 1" - 6'.

Display and Model









Renderings and Plans



Site Paths



Primary Road



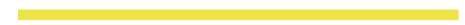
Road in Site



Gravel Path

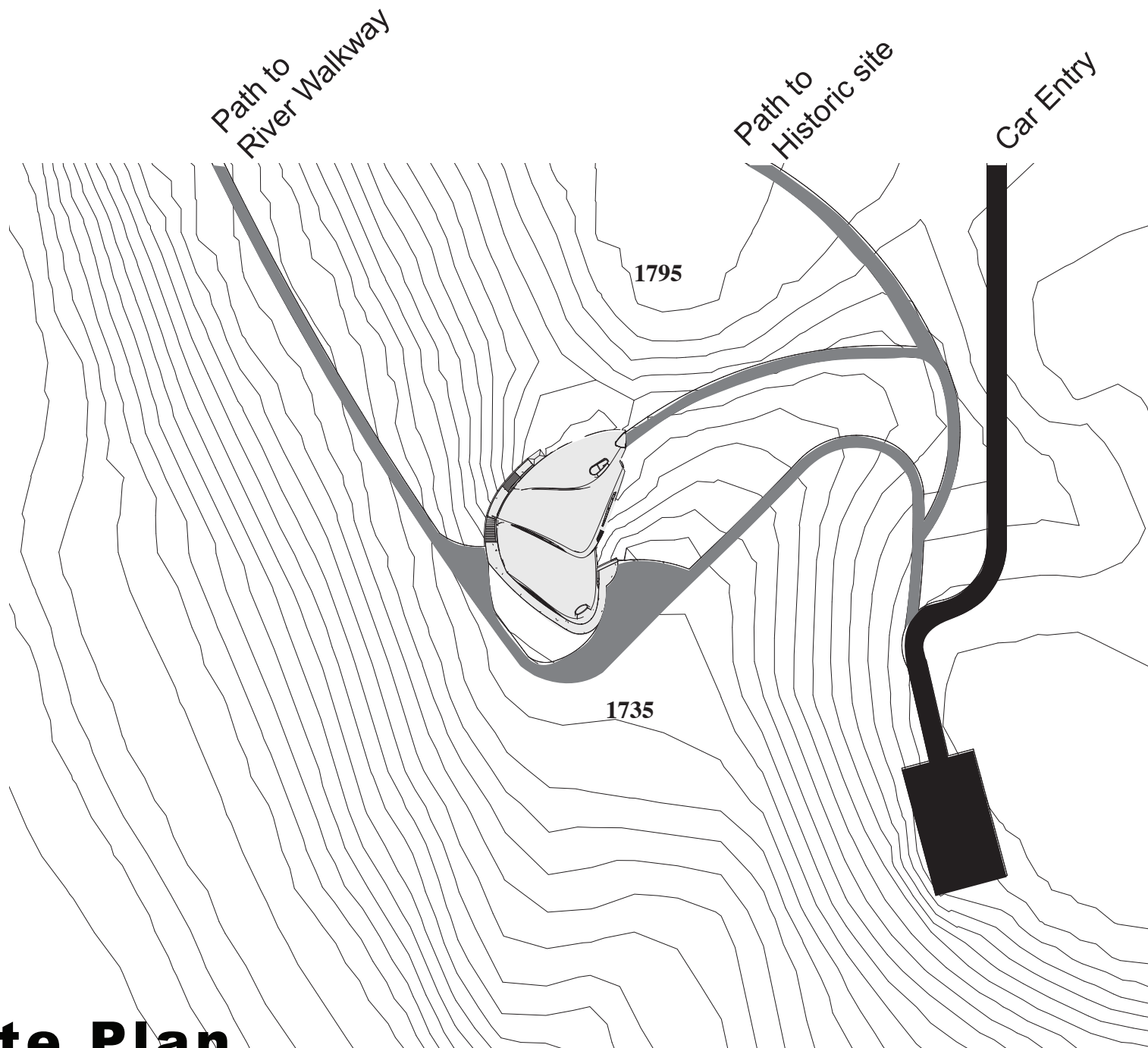


Walking Path

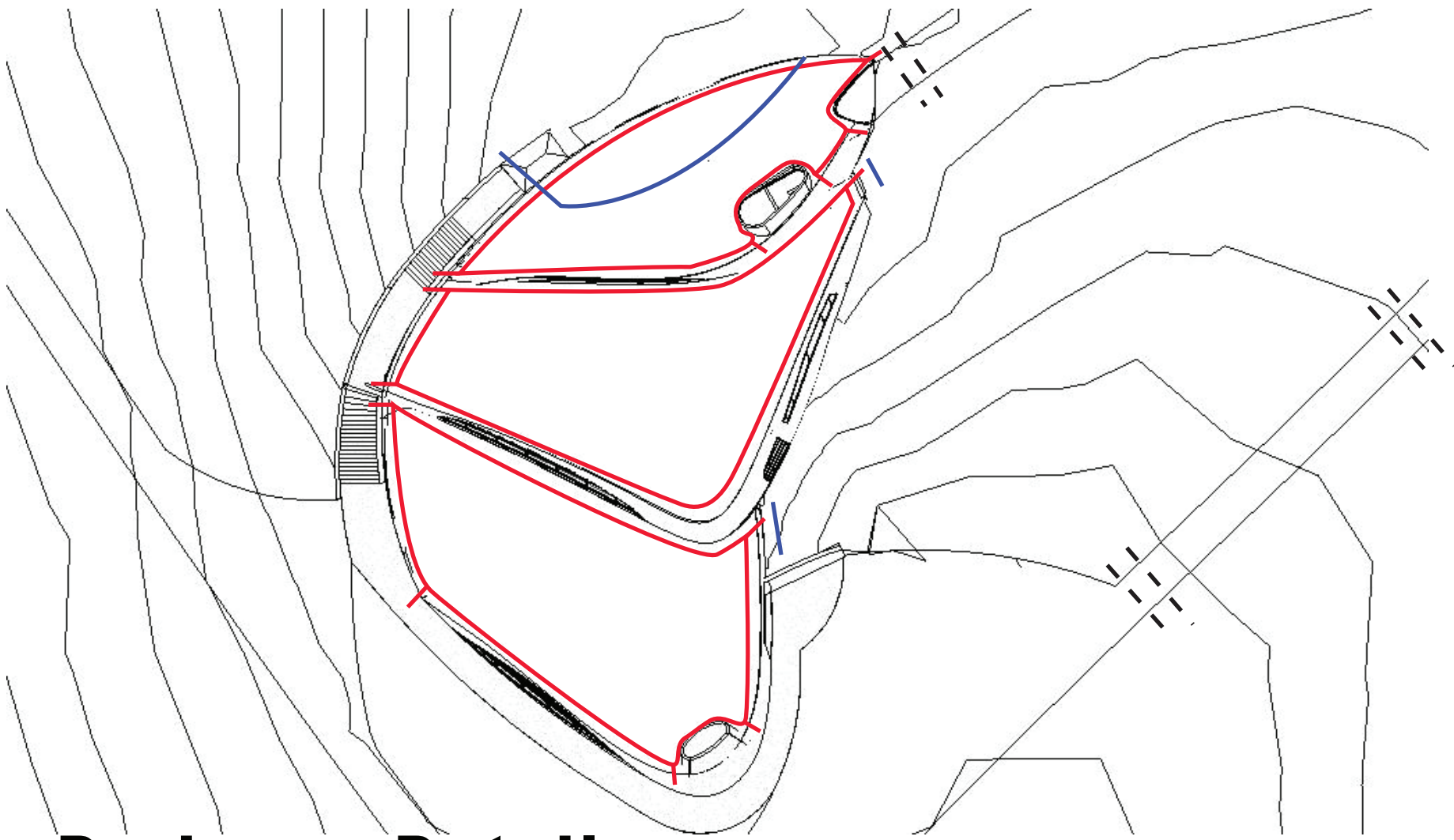


Bike Trail

Site Plan



- Protective Barrier
- Roof Drain and exits
- - - - - Drain Tunnel



Drainage Detail

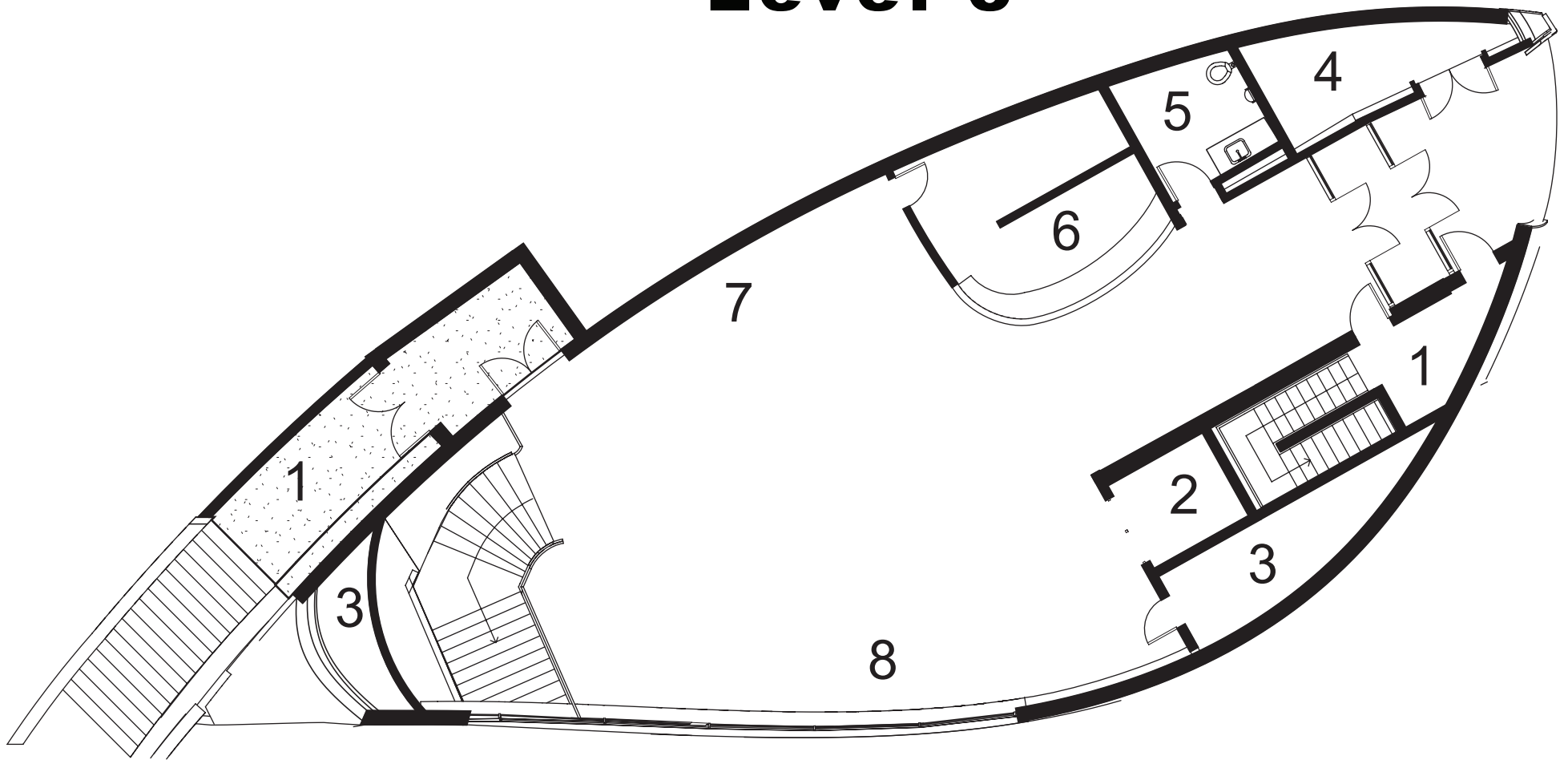


Entry Perspective



Level 1 Interior

Level 3



1 - Fire Stair

2 - Elevator

3 - Mechanical

4 - Storage

5 - Restroom

6 - Information Desk

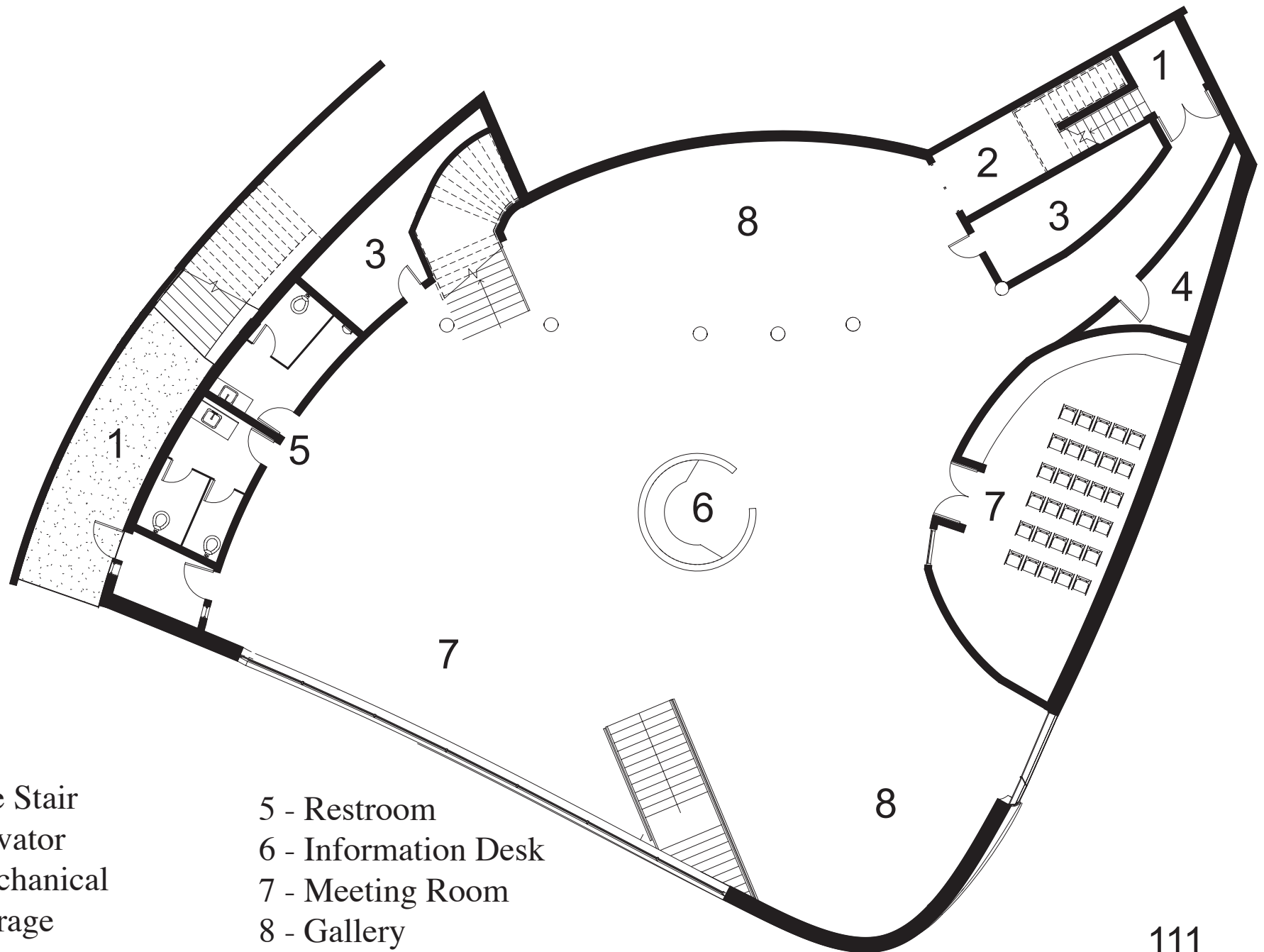
7 - Site and Geological Exhibit

8 - Meeting Area



Level 2 Interior

Level 2



1 - Fire Stair
2 - Elevator
3 - Mechanical
4 - Storage

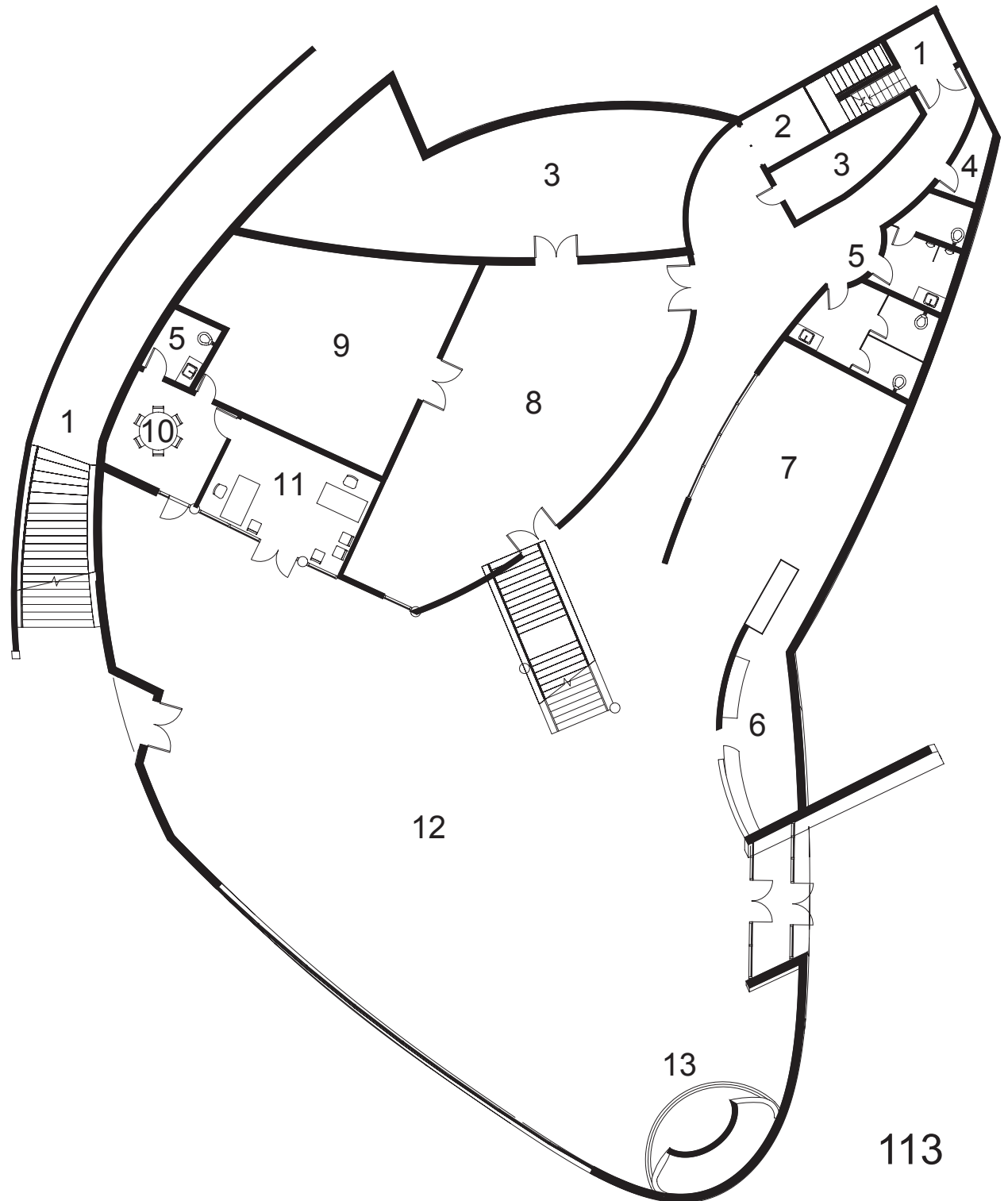
5 - Restroom
6 - Information Desk
7 - Meeting Room
8 - Gallery



Level 3 Interior

Level 1

- 1 - Fire Stair
- 2 - Elevator
- 3 - Mechanical
- 4 - Storage
- 6 - Restroom
- 7 - Information Desk
- 8 - Storage and Prep area
- 9 - Controlled Storage
- 10- Employee Lounge
- 11 - Office
- 12 - Exhibit / Great Hall
- 13 - Hearth

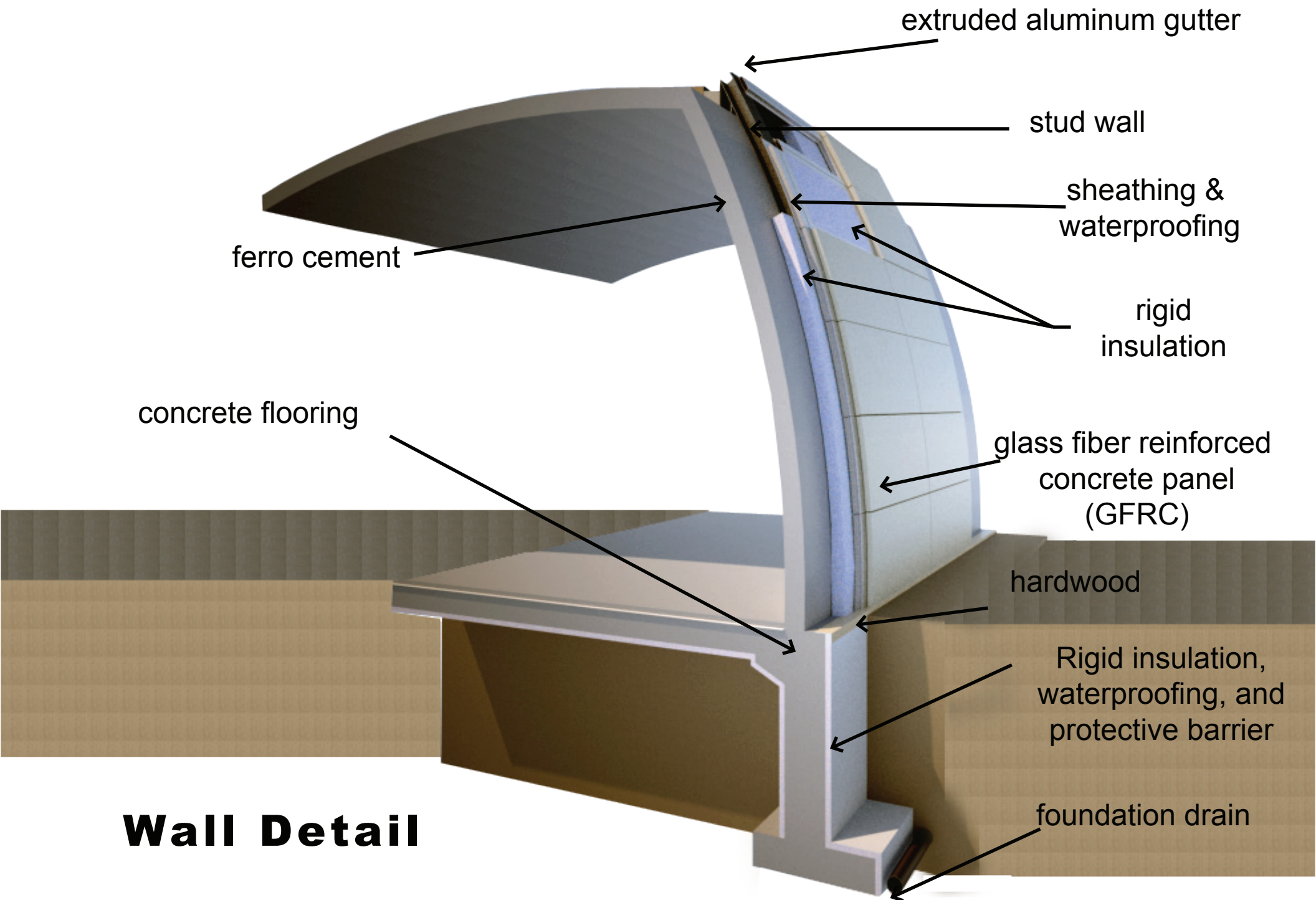




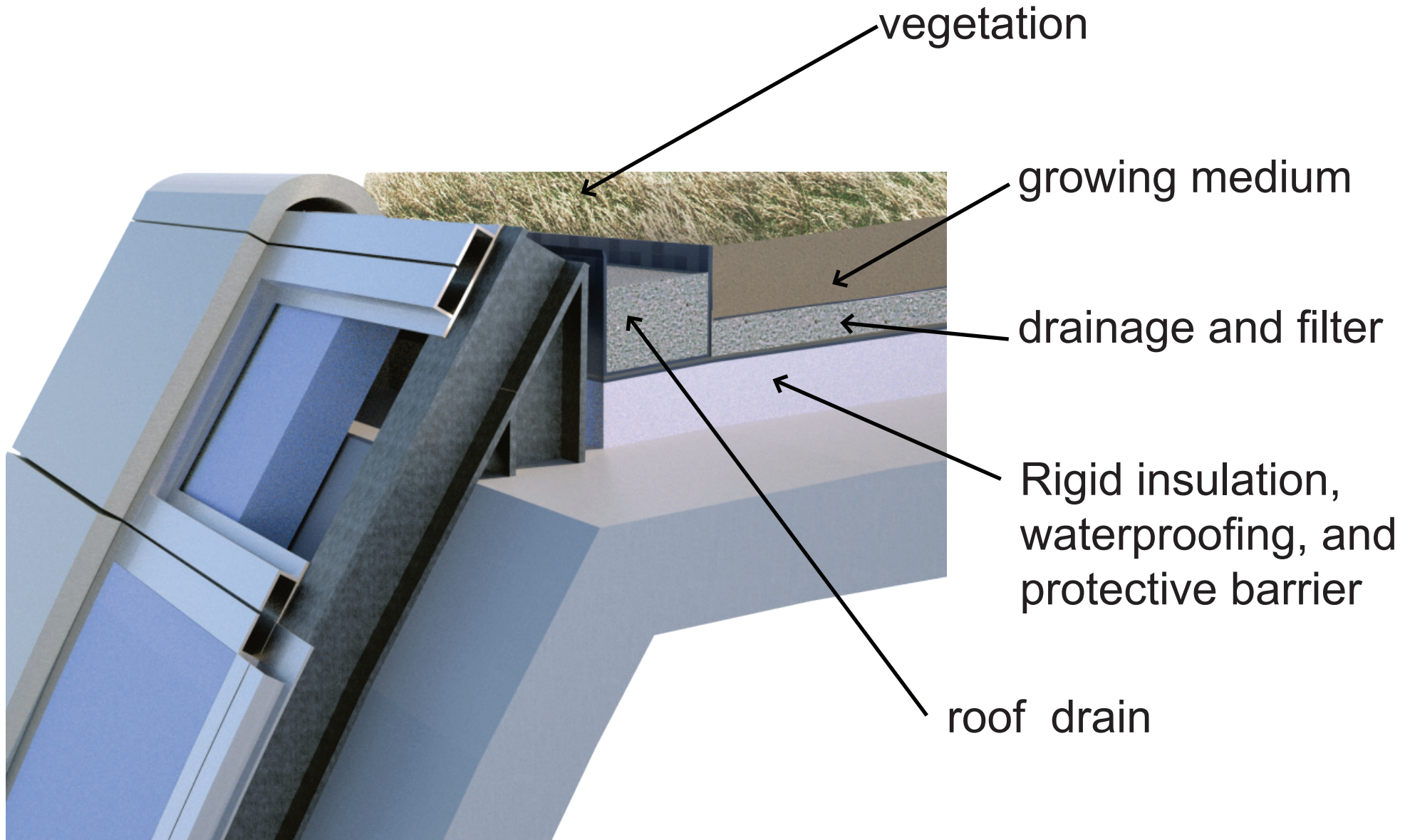
Entry Perspective



Details - Sectional Perspective



Wall Detail



Roof Detail

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